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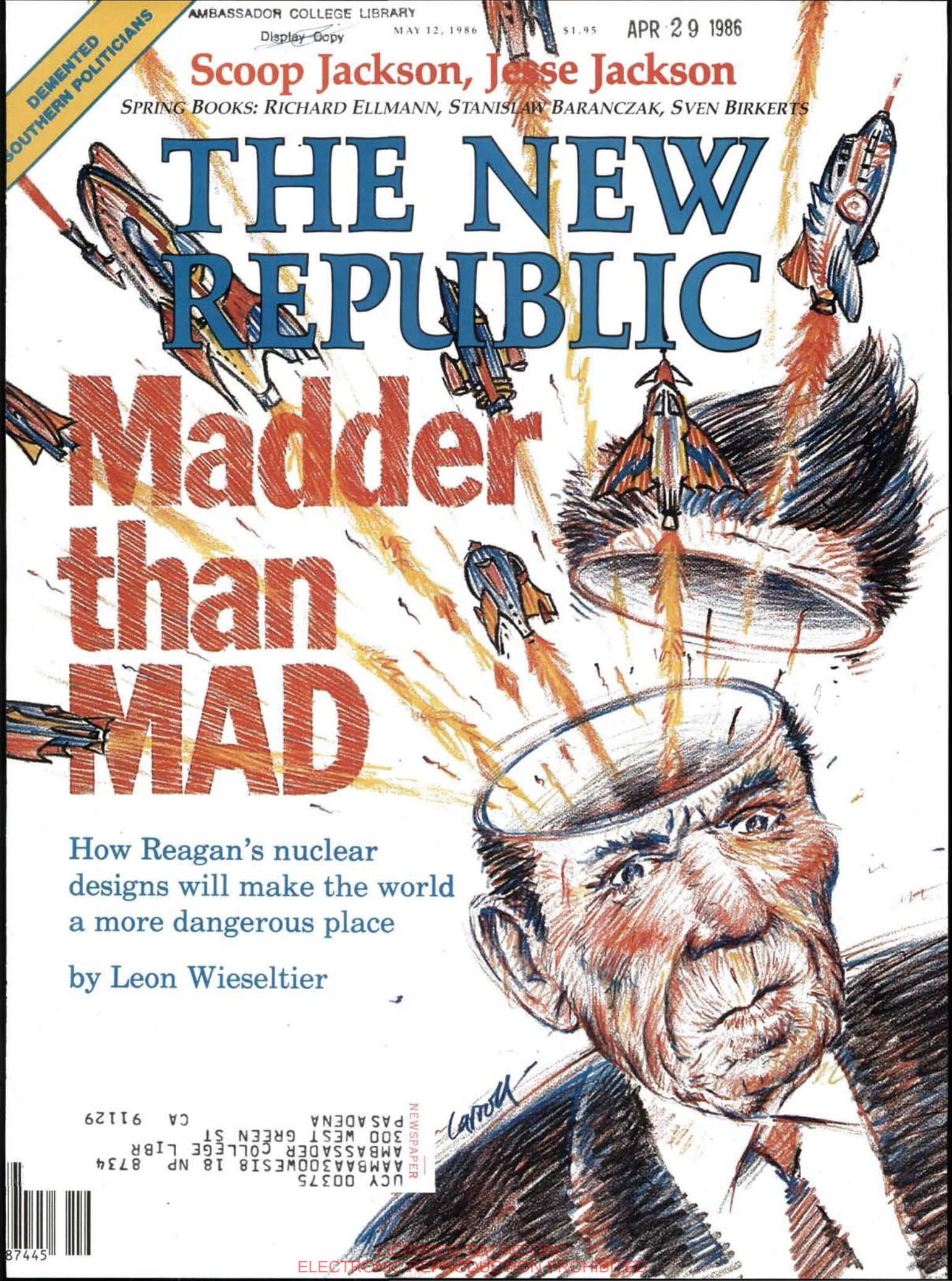
by Leon Wieseltier



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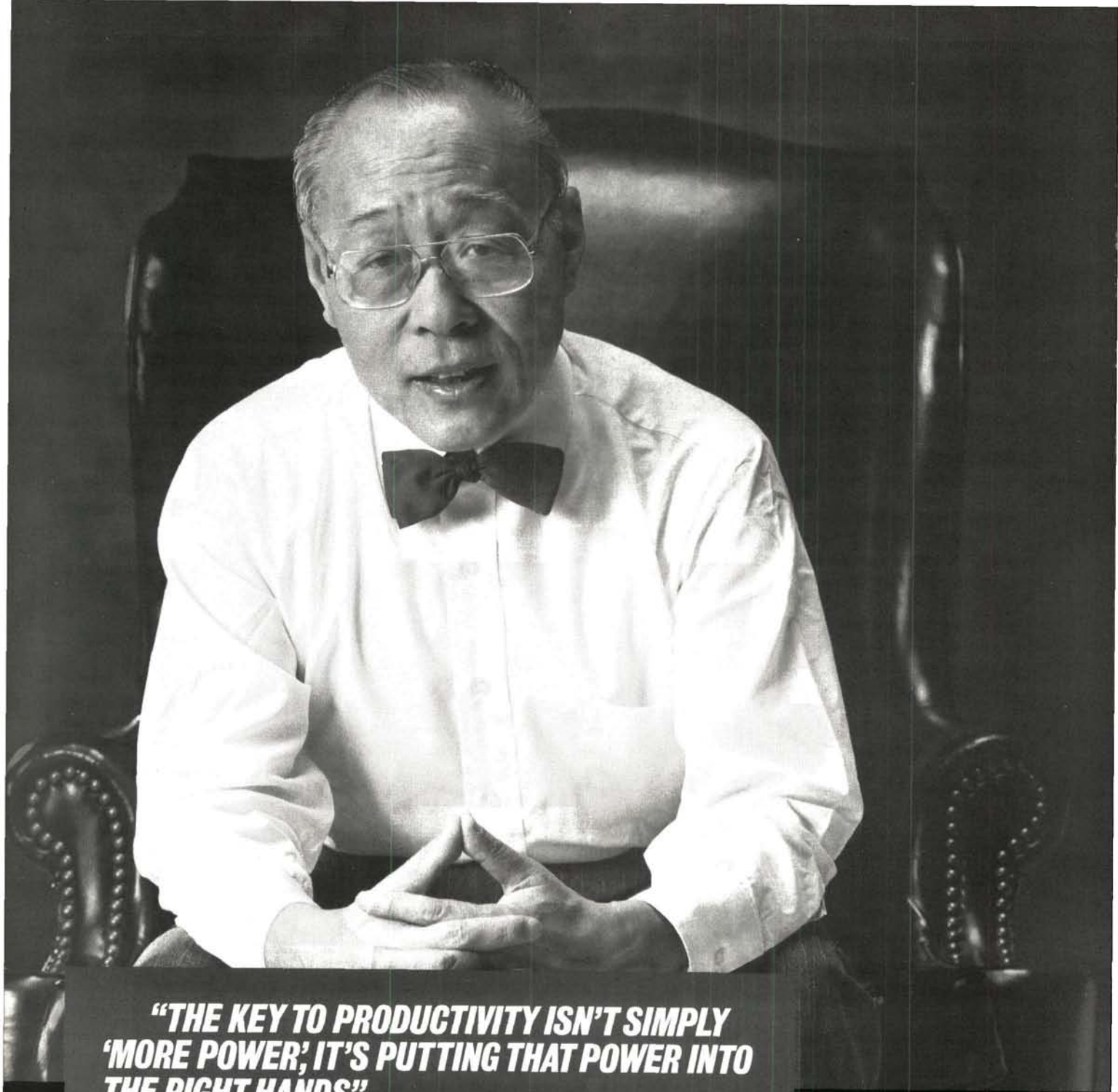

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FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,721

WASHINGTON, D.C. — MAY 12, 1986

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CORRESPONDENCE

CANADIAN CANARDS

To the editors:
Mark Hosenball should invest in an atlas before he attempts any more postcards ("Hiding Sikhs," April 7). Burnaby, British Columbia, is not a "small logging town on Vancouver Island" but rather a large suburb of Vancouver.

CHRIS PROBERT
Toronto, Ontario

Mark Hosenball replies:
I meant to say Duncan, British Columbia, not Burnaby. Sorry.

To the editors:
I *do* wish your writers and editors would stop treating Canada like some overgrown extra state somewhere vaguely north of the Great Lakes. In "Sex and Success" (April 21), Mark Stevens writes that the artist Eric Fischl is the subject of a large traveling show that "was organized by Bruce Ferguson for the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, Canada."

What you have done is equivalent to a Canadian writer's stating that such and such occurred in Chicago, America (or more likely, as one says up here, "Chicago, the States"). Sounds pretty dumb, doesn't it? Well, so do you.

THAD RICHARDS
Mt-Tremblant, Quebec

DECLINING MASS. WELFARE

To the editors:
Fred Barnes's piece on the Massachusetts E.T. Choices program ("Dukakis Rising," April 14) was, for the most part, accurate. One area, however, needs some clarification: E.T. and the welfare caseload. Since E.T. began in October 1983, the Massachusetts caseload of Aid to Families with Dependent Children has dropped four percent. The average for the other major welfare states is a one percent increase—or a difference of five percentage points.

Warren Brookes, cited by Mr. Barnes, is a columnist syndicated by the Heritage Foundation. He hails the impact of federal budget changes that pushed 30,000 people off the welfare rolls in Massachusetts in 1981 and 1982. We prefer offering welfare recipients jobs that pay an average of over $10,000 per year. While the impact on the welfare caseload may seem "piddling," our goal is opportunity for all, not balancing the federal budget on the backs of the poor.

THOMAS P. GLYNN
Department of Public Welfare
Boston, Massachusetts

ERITREAN ERROR?

To the editors:
TNR's April 7 editorial ("The Philippine Corollary") says that "Ethiopia is also often and curiously included in the Reagan Doctrine, although that insurgency, which is separatist, has no ideological context whatsoever. . . . The insurgency was going on much as it is today when the country was ruled by Haile Selassie." TNR is either curiously ignorant of Eritrea's history or deliberately attempting to mislead its readers about an area of the world that is usually ignored by the press.

The Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front, which has been fighting the Ethiopian governments for over 20 years, has a clear ideology of nationalism and Marxism. It currently governs about 80 percent of Eritrea, and obviously has support of the people there.

CHRISTY LANZL
Boston, Massachusetts

BLAME THE PRESS

To the editors:
As an Illinois voter who didn't vote for any LaRouchies, I share your concerns about voter apathy ("Democracy's Rusty Weapon," April 14). But I must disagree with your apportionment of such a large share of the blame for this fiasco to the Illinois electorate. A functioning democracy depends on an informed citizenry, which depends in turn on the press and the competing political organizations for its information. However, in the days and weeks before this election, *not one* of the major newspapers in the state, nor any local affiliate of any of the major networks, paid any significant attention to the fact that there were *any* LaRouche candidates on the ballot, let alone provided any coverage of what they stood for. With such a vacuum of information, even if 80 percent of the voters had cast

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RECREATIONAL SEX?

For human beings, says Roger Scruton, there can be no such thing. The human sexual act is inextricably linked to moral considerations whether we are conscious of them or not.

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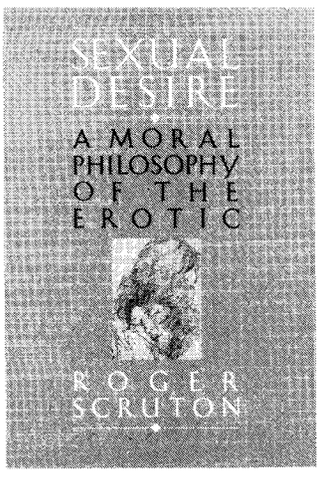

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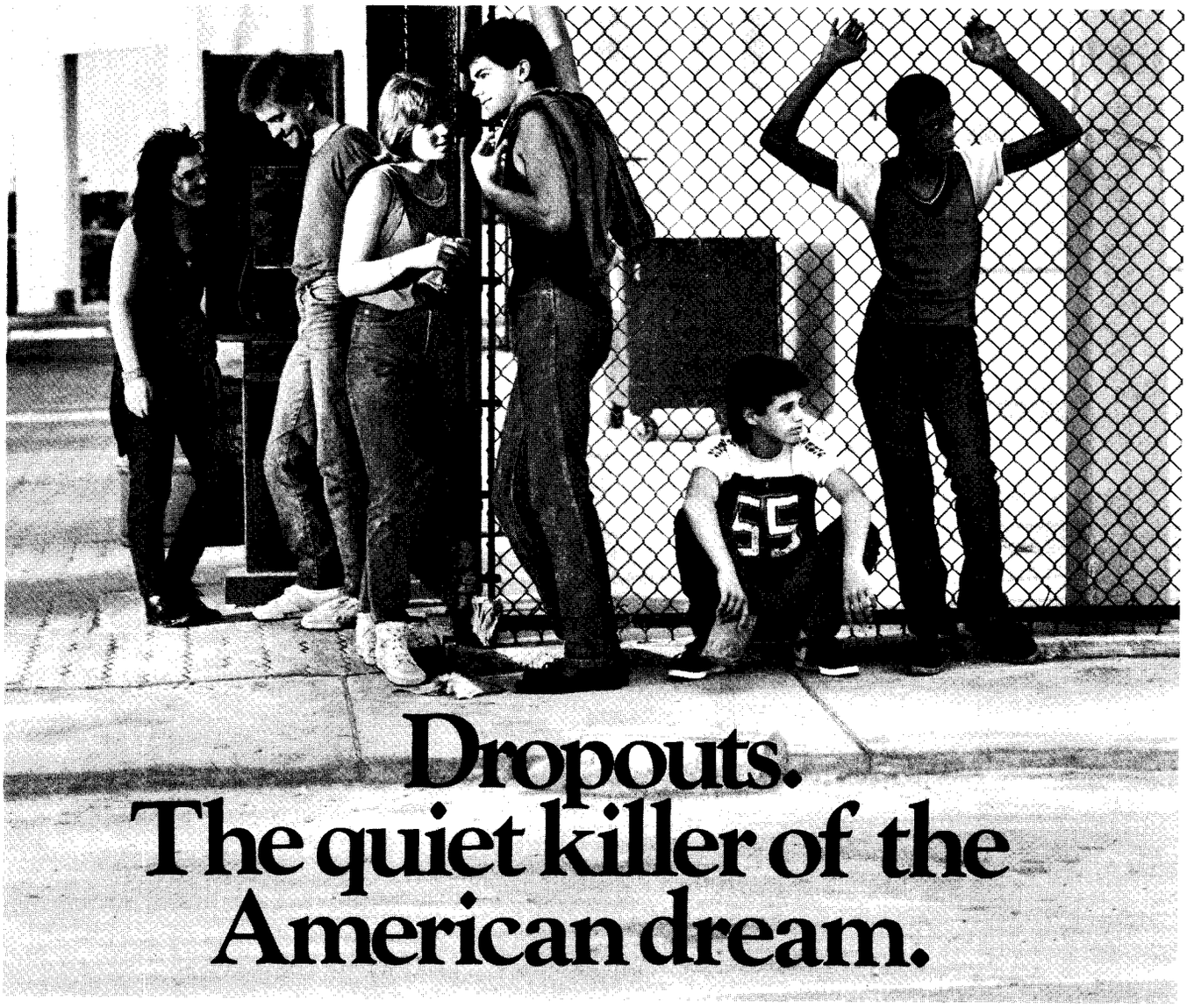

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Thirty percent of America's teenagers aren't graduating from high school. That's three quarters of a million dropouts each year.

In our large cities — Boston, New York, Detroit, Chicago, Washington and Philadelphia — the dropout rate is 35-50%.

The cost to society of the dropout crisis is staggering. More than half of the nation's prison inmates are dropouts — and it costs taxpayers up to $25,000 a year to house a prisoner in a correctional institution. That total is higher than the cost of a year of education at either Harvard or Yale.

The Business Advisory Commission of the Education Commission of the States recently called on all of society — business, schools, civic organizations, labor and professional groups — to address the dropout problem. We as a nation cannot let one quarter of America's youth continue to drift toward hopelessness.

That's why the National Education Association has initiated a major new effort to rescue young people from academic failure. NEA has committed $1.7 million to this effort — one dollar for every NEA member. We will devote $700,000 to this war-chest against scholastic failure to Operation Rescue, our new program to combat the dropout and illiteracy syndrome.

The remaining $1 million will establish an endowment to make educational excellence grants available to teachers for years to come. And we're asking other concerned groups — both inside and outside education — to join teachers in building this fund. Our aim is to begin funding local dropout prevention programs by the fall of 1986.

Our goal with Operation Rescue? We want to help cut the dropout rate in half by 1990.

Our goal as an association? In over 128 years, that's never wavered. We stand for excellence in every classroom, for every child.

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THE SUBJECT IS EXCELLENCE

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

NUCLEAR SUPERIORITY

> Whether the United States should be willing to accept a position of parity in military power with the Soviet Union over the longer run can (and should) be debated.
> —Secretary of Defense Weinberger in the Spring 1986 issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

Sometime soon, an influential conservative journal like *Commentary* or *Policy Review* (or perhaps the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page) is going to publish an article titled something like "What's Wrong with Nuclear Superiority?" As the official explanations for this nation's nuclear policy get more and more implausible, and as conservative intellectual machismo continues to ferment, someone is going to lose his *"pas devant les enfants"* scruples and say it outright.

The basic argument will be that the Soviet Union is entering a period of economic decay and technological stagnation. This gives us an opportunity to lead the arms race in a direction that will leave them hopelessly behind. "Behind" doesn't mean in numbers of weapons, an unimportant measure in the nuclear age (though U.S. spending on nuclear weapons has almost doubled in real terms since 1980). "Behind" means that with a new generation of accurate and invulnerable submarine-based missiles, along with "Star Wars" defenses, we alone will have the ability to devastate the other side's arsenal in a first strike and then survive a crippled counterattack.

At least this argument will bring some intellectual honesty and coherence to the administration's nuclear policy. Take Star Wars. President Reagan still insists that the purpose is to "make nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete," and that the Soviets are well ahead of us in developing strategic defense. In fact, no one seriously doubts that we have the edge. That's why the Soviets are so eager to stop it. And no one but Reagan thinks a strategic defense can be perfect, thus making nuclear weapons worthless.

Reagan's more sophisticated apologists make fancier arguments that strategic defense will shore up deterrence by protecting our missiles from attack. But the mobile, single-warhead Midgetman missile would be a far cheaper way to make sure our arsenal could survive and respond to a first strike. Yet the administration continues to slight Midgetman in favor of spending on Star Wars and the non-mobile, multiwarhead MX—a classic first-strike (use-it-or-lose-it) weapon. This raises the suspicion that the actual purpose of Star Wars is to protect us against a crippled Soviet retaliatory strike, thus making the threat of our own first strike more convincing. (Isn't nuclear strategy wonderful?)

Or is Star Wars just a "bargaining chip" for arms control? The administration insists it is not. I believe this, since (despite the recent decision to continue abiding by SALT II) the lack of enthusiasm for arms control among Reaganites is manifest. The administration's ostensible reasons for rejecting the Soviet offer of a comprehensive nuclear test ban, for example—an offer backed up by a unilateral Soviet testing halt—are transparently insincere. Reagan is the first president of the nuclear age to oppose such a treaty. Apart from the tedious question of whether verification is possible, does anyone really believe that the problem of verification (or concern that untested bombs could go off by accident, or the desire to reduce our total kilotonnage by developing smaller bombs, and so on) is why the Reagan administration opposes a test ban?

There are complicated explanations of how the pieces of the administration's nuclear strategy fit together. But the principle of Occam's razor recommends the simple explanation. So what is wrong with nuclear superiority, if we can get it? Liberal critics must be prepared to explain why superiority—a concept they ridiculed as meaningless when the question was whether the Russians had it—becomes meaningful and full of danger when the question is whether we should have it. There is an answer. There are four answers, in fact.

First, if the Soviets come to believe we are seeking and may soon achieve nuclear superiority, they will be under great pressure to make their moves before we

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MAY 12, 1986

THREE SUMMITS

War comes when diplomacy fails. But when military force is no longer an appropriate means of expression, dazed and dusty diplomats return to their old work of words, on slightly different terms. Three troubled diplomatic summits mark that return in the aftermath of the U.S. air raid on Libya. The day after the American attack, the Kremlin canceled a meeting between Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Secretary of State George Shultz that was to finalize plans for a Reagan-Gorbachev meeting in Washington this summer. That same day, in Geneva, 13 representatives of the OPEC nations convened in order to condemn the bombing of Tripoli, but ended up rejecting a desperate appeal by the Libyan oil minister for an OPEC embargo against the United States. And in Tokyo, the leaders of the seven major Western industrialized nations will gather later this month in an effort to hold a seemingly fragile alliance together in the midst of sharp disagreements over the proper response to terrorism.

Moscow's actions are, as usual, the easiest to decipher and the hardest to defend. Feigned outrage over President Reagan's use of force against a Third World nation earns points for the Russians among the so-called nonaligned countries. By sabotaging the upcoming summit (or at least threatening to), the Soviets may hope to put the blame for the failure of arms control talks squarely on Reagan's broad, warlike shoulders. Few will notice that in linking Libya to the progress of high-level talks, the Soviets contradict their long-held insistence that discussions on nuclear arms remain apart from disputes over other geopolitical issues.

Unfortunately, the Shultz-Shevardnadze flap diverts attention from the decisive Soviet role in promoting state-sponsored terrorism. So does the frequently heard charge by critics of the raid that U.S. military action will drive the Libyans into the arms of the Soviets. Qaddafi's navy consists of Nanuchka-class missile corvettes. His air force boasts hundreds of MIG-23 fighter interceptors and Sukhoi attack fighters. And the Soviets currently maintain 6,000 military advisers on Libyan soil. How much tighter could the evil embrace of these two countries get?

The results of the OPEC meeting debunk the myth that a firm U.S. policy against outlaw regimes like Qaddafi's will alienate the few remaining moderate Arab states. Hardly. If anything, the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, for example, would like nothing better than to see Qaddafi dispatched. Last September, Tunisia severed diplomatic ties with Libya. Following the American air raid, Tunisia's president, Habib Bourguiba, remained silent and the major Tunis daily newspapers refrained from all editorial comment on the attack. Jordan's King Hussein broke off ties to Tripoli early in 1984. Qaddafi's support of Iran in the Gulf war has earned him the enmity of Iraq. So it should come as no surprise that none of the other 12 OPEC members was willing to take serious actions on behalf of Libya in its time of need.

The Geneva gathering confirms the inevitable political decline that followed the collapse of the once-mighty cartel in the world oil market. It seems difficult to believe that just a decade ago an American president would not dare even to contemplate aloud the idea of a retaliatory mission against a Middle Eastern terrorist headquarters, for fear of angering the providers of precious oil. Only the Israelis had nothing to lose in this respect. Reagan is thus doubly blessed by today's petroleum glut: the U.S. economy benefits from lower oil prices and the president retains the power, prestige, and initiative America ought to command on the Middle Eastern scene.

Reagan can put that prestige to good use when the talking starts in Tokyo. These great power summits used to be little more than spectacular photo opportunities in some sunny resort setting. This year the convocation has taken on a more serious demeanor, and Reagan ought to be the most serious of the seven. Politically, he stands taller than most of his colleagues: Mitterrand, Kohl, and Craxi have all experienced party setbacks on the domestic front in recent months. Thatcher was slipping dramatically in the polls even before her unpopular stance on Libya. And Mulroney's Canada and Nakasone's Japan rarely figure into global affairs. Reagan can thus easily cast himself as dean and statesman of the alliance.

Is it an alliance at all? Dissension over the Libyan raid demonstrated once again that our interests and the inter-

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ests of the European community rarely coincide beyond the boundaries of the Continent itself. Nationalism, greed, and cowardice on the part of the Europeans explain the differences, especially when it comes to a delicate issue like Middle Eastern terrorism. But a common cultural heritage and vigilant postwar anticommunism explain the need for the ties that remain.

Give the Europeans some credit. They have come a very long way on Libya in the past few weeks, though not without significant prodding from the United States. Sadly, it took bombs to wake them up from their isolationist stupor. Reagan's air raid in effect shifted the spectrum of acceptable alternatives in dealing with Qaddafi, and thereby forced the Europeans to appear reasonable by coming up with some better ideas themselves. British foreign secretary Geoffrey Howe expressed the changed circumstances of the debate when he spoke to critics of the bombing mission in the Labor Party. "If you are concerned about the possibility of an American military attack," Howe argued, "the Europeans must be able to show a commitment to alternative means."

Slowly and reluctantly, the Europeans are coming around. France expelled two Libyan diplomats in early April for planning an attack on the U.S. consulate in Paris, and Prime Minister Jacques Chirac has put a crackdown on terror high on his domestic agenda. Reagan even thanked the French government on television the night of the Libya raid for its help in aborting a "planned massacre" targeted at "civilians waiting in line for visas at an American embassy," despite the French denial of airspace rights for our F-111s. The representatives of the European Community, meeting at the Hague on April 15, agreed to impose stricter visa requirements on Libyan travelers. That's an improvement, considering that in January the organization condemned state-sponsored terrorism without even mentioning Libya by name. Bonn initially criticized the American raid. But shortly thereafter Chancellor Kohl announced that his government had solid proof that the Libyan People's Bureau in East Berlin was responsible for the bomb that killed two and wounded 200 at La Belle Discotheque. In response to massive protest rallies throughout Germany, Kohl warned against what he called "primitive anti-Americanism," and added that the disco explosion "caused more injuries than were caused by the U.S." in the Tripoli attack.

Reagan can call the European bluff in Tokyo. Critics of the raid claimed that sanctions and diplomatic options had not as yet been exhausted when the president turned to violence. That's disingenuous nonsense. The Europeans were the major obstacle all along. The United States on more than one occasion begged the European governments to join us in such measures. None responded. More important, now that the Europeans in hindsight say they're solidly behind sanctions rather than force, Reagan should try to get them to put it in writing once and for all. They'll probably refuse, but at least that would put the onus of responsibility clearly on the European allies alone.

One last point Reagan might take up at the seven-power summit. The decline of OPEC is even better for the Europeans than it is for us, since they import far more of their oil. With the glut, it can no longer be argued that the Europeans "depend" on Libyan oil and therefore must appease Qaddafi. They certainly buy OPEC oil, but the proportion of the total OPEC oil consumed that originates in Libya is under ten percent for almost all of the countries involved. Anyway there's plenty of petroleum around now to make up for embargoed Libyan oil exports. So why not take advantage of the moment and isolate the Libyans economically? The real reason is not dependence. It's greed—for the money generated by trade with Libya. But leave it to market forces to solve that problem. We figure it won't be long before the revenues lost on canceled American travel plans across the Atlantic will equal or exceed the revenues sacrificed in the event of a Libyan embargo. Tourism in Europe, according to U.S. officials, may be down almost 80 percent this summer, due to fear of terrorism. Ironically, Moscow, overlord of terror, is a popular travel alternative.

NOTEBOOK

□ FAREWELL, MY LOVELY: The villain of John le Carré's 1983 novel *The Little Drummer Girl* was a man named Kurtz, an Israeli master of intelligence who arranged for Charlie, an American woman in London, to fall in love with a Palestinian master of terrorism, so that he could be identified and (unknown to the poor woman) killed. Readers (and moviegoers) everywhere were horrified at the callousness of the Israeli characters, though there were some who protested the implausibility of the plot. Well, the plot turns out to be plausible; but the grim joke is on le Carré. It's a Palestinian who has used Kurtz's stratagem. His name is Nezar Hindawi, and on April 18 he was arrested in London for placing a bomb in the suitcase of his pregnant fiancée before she boarded an El Al flight to Tel Aviv. The plane was to carry 450 people. According to the *New York Times*, the man "gave her the bag with the bomb in it before he kissed her goodbye." At least Kurtz didn't intend to kill Charlie, too.

□ DEADLINES AND DOUBLE STANDARDS: The state of press freedom in Central America is dire—but not only in Nicaragua, as the Reagan administration would like us to believe. The Sandinistas' repression of *La Prensa*, the only independent paper left in Managua, has been the focus of repeated—and justified—criticism. While never formally shutting down the paper, the Sandinistas have demanded the removal of so many articles that the paper on occasion has been forced to skip entire issues. Sandinista apologists sometimes claim that the country's civil war justifies these restrictions, but the harassment of *La Prensa* began in 1980—well before the *contra* war started. But in 1980 the independent press in El Salvador and Guatemala was also

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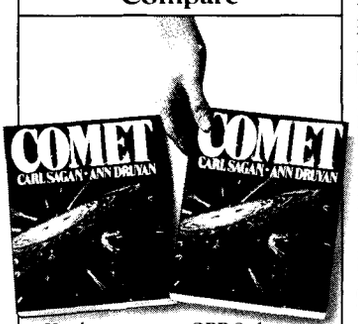

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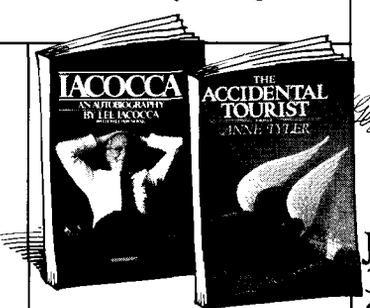

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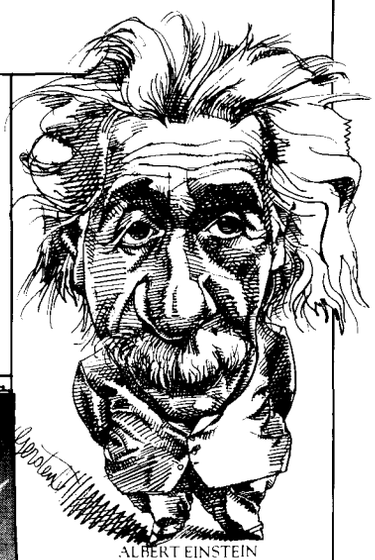

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suffering from governmental attacks, the effects of which are still felt. In July 1980, for example, a top editor and photographer from *La Cronica del Pueblo*, a San Salvador tabloid with a circulation of about 20,000, were kidnapped by a military death squad. They were hacked to death with machetes and their bodies were dumped on the street. The paper closed. On January 16, 1981, *El Independiente*, another daily that had endured repeated assaults for its criticism of the military government, was shut down by truckloads of Salvadoran army troops. The paper's printing equipment was destroyed and the paper's editor, Jorge Pinto, had to flee to Mexico. In Guatemala the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights reports that 47 journalists have been killed since 1978, almost all of them by agents of the government. The military regimes that perpetrated this violence have since been succeeded by democratically elected governments. But the memory of the mutilated bodies lingers, and that's one reason why no left-wing or even moderate independent newspapers have emerged in the improved democratic conditions in both countries. The National Endowment for Democracy has provided crucial aid to *La Prensa* in Nicaragua. Why not similar aid to independent journalists in El Salvador and Guatemala?

□ GRAMM-RUDMAN WATCH: In this space, from time to time, we will be awarding prizes for the most creative application of the so-called Firemen First principle in response to the Gramm-Rudman budgetary constraints. This principle holds that an agency under budgetary pressure will tend to cut its most popular or essential services, hoping that the ensuing cries of outrage will cow politicians into restoring the lost funds. This week's first prize goes to the National Park Service. According to the *New York Times*, Park Service officials in the New York area had "reluctantly decided to close all sites *on Sundays* starting this month." (Emphasis added.) Second prize goes to Congress itself, for making reporters go to the Government Printing Office to buy documents they are used to getting for free. There's no reason why press privileges should be exempt from budget cuts, but whoever dreamed up this one sure knows how to stir up a fuss.

□ TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE: Vice President George Bush, in a mid-April speech to a joint session of the New Hampshire legislature, described Muammar Qaddafi as "an insipid monster."

□ SLEAZEBALL WATCH: An aide to House Majority Leader Jim Wright named Paul Driskell has decided to become a lobbyist, and this is apparently a cause for celebration. "The Honorable James Wright," says an invitation received in this office, "The House Democratic Leadership and Fleishman-Hillard, Inc., . . . cordially invite you to a reception honoring Paul Driskell on the opening of Paul Driskell Associates," which will be a division of the Fleishman-Hillard firm. According to the back of the invitation, "Paul, like many before him, is moving from Capitol Hill to Connecticut Avenue." But is a mere Capitol Hill reception sufficient recognition of this magnificent achievement? Surely the foundation of a new lobbying firm is worth the Congressional Medal of Honor.

□ POLICY AIMS:

Qaddafi Was
A Target Of U.S. Raid

'Hoped We'd Get Him,' Official Says; At Least 1 Jet Aimed at Residence

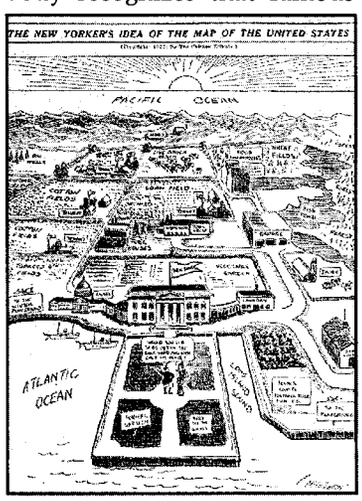
SHULTZ EXPRESSES HOPES FOR A COUP TO OUST QADDAFI

'ALL TO THE GOOD,' HE SAYS

A Goal of Raid Is Described as Spurring Libya Dissidents, Not Killing the Leader

—The front pages of the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, April 18

□ HAVEN'T WE SEEN THIS SOMEWHERE BEFORE? Everybody recognizes that famous cover of the *New Yorker* magazine with New York's provincial view of the United States, and the dozens of imitations the cover has spawned in Los Angeles, Washington, New Orleans, even Pewaukee, Wisconsin. Now Professor Kenneth C. Martis of West Virginia University has called to our attention this *Chicago Tribune* cartoon from 1922.



WASHINGTON SCENE

RAINBOW WARRIOR

THE REV. JESSE JACKSON appeared a bit baffled as he surveyed the crowd at the "Save the Family Farmers" breakfast he held here last weekend. "Y'all are a strange combination of folks sitting in this room," he mused, looking out at tables equally divided between black urbanites and white farmers. Although the two groups weren't mingling much, all were hooting in response, and happily feeding on an authentic cholesterol-

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laden meal of scrambled eggs, sausages, grits, and biscuits with gravy. "When the urban eaters and the rural feeders start coming together, it's worth observing," Jackson said.

Of course, such varied constituencies don't just "come together" by themselves. The National Rainbow Coalition went to a lot of expense and trouble to bus farmers to its convention from places as distant as Nebraska and Wyoming. But Jackson, who didn't exactly sweep primaries in those states in 1984, considers the money and effort well spent. Farm is, in fact, the newest noncolor in his ever-broadening rainbow. At the three-day convention Jackson added a few other dubious hues as well: depressed oil workers from Texas and Oklahoma, with whom he has ingratiated himself by calling for higher gas prices, and striking workers at the Hormel meat plant in Austin, Minnesota, to whose defense he rallied only a few days before his convention began. These are merely the fruits of his most recent headline chasing.

JACKSON APPEARS to be on a search-and-exaggerate mission on behalf of all of these groups. With the farmers, for example, he begins by tremendously inflating the nation's plight. Agribusiness is taking over, he said in his keynote address, and "as corporations have poisoned our air and water and land, they will surely poison our food as well." Next Jackson blames the crisis on the callousness of President Reagan—even though Reagan recently signed the most expensive agriculture bill ever. Stage three is to promise the farmers everything under the rainbow: a moratorium on foreclosures, full "parity" for all agricultural commodities, refinancing of their debts, and emergency funds for planting. "We had to rebuild Europe even though it was expensive," Jackson said at one of his many press conferences. "We had to rebuild Japan even though it was expensive. . . . We can do it for the family farmer." What Jackson actually proposes isn't "rebuilding" the family farm, but simply preserving it through government subsidies and artificially high food prices (that's what "parity" means). The effect of higher food prices on the urban poor, Jackson's core constituency, is a connection he doesn't seem to have made.

Even more ludicrous is Jackson's plan to rescue "the energy worker who worked to fuel our nation." Before the convention he told reporters that the price of oil should be jawboned up. "The J. R. Ewings can shrug it off," he said in his speech, "but energy workers lose their jobs." And his newest formulation: "Gas is 25 cents cheaper, but is freedom worth a quarter? I say it is." I asked Jackson how high the price needed to be jawboned, and whether he has in mind getting the Saudis to raise their own price, or an oil import fee, or a gasoline tax, or what. "That's for the technicians to work out," he said. However it's done, raising the price of gas would be another pointless blow to the poor.

The number of votes represented by the Hormel strikers, or even unemployed oil drillers, is tiny. But Jackson has never been the kind of candidate who throws back the little ones when he goes issue-fishing. He says he hopes to string together "a pearl necklace" of every group that has been dispossessed, disenfranchised, or harmed in any way by "Reaganomics." Jackson thinks such a coalition can propel him to the presidency in 1988. His newest buzzword is "operational unity," which amounts to a sort of umbrella for all who find themselves to the left of Mario Cuomo. But if Jackson continues to reconcile interests that actually conflict by never saying no to any of them, the cynicism of his constituency-building will become obvious.

Jackson isn't worried about erosion in his black base, and is devoting most of his energy to reaching out to white "progressives." At the convention he proudly displayed his newest catches: William W. Winpisinger, president of the International Association of Machinists, and Kenneth T. Blaylock, president of the American Federation of Government Employees. Both of these men say their unions are dissatisfied with the mainstream of the Democratic Party. Winpisinger was particularly vociferous in denouncing the neoliberal deviation.

What does unite this coalition of left-outs and left-wingers? At home, Jackson says it's opposition to Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation and support for massive cuts in defense spending. Abroad, it's a "noninterventionist policy." Jackson's pronouncements during the conference could provide Jeane Kirkpatrick with enough material for a dozen columns on moral equivalence. The Rainbow Coalition doesn't just oppose the *contras*, it supports the Sandinistas. As Jackson's newspaper puts it, "the Sandinistas conducted fair elections in 1984—as verified by international observers." Jackson doesn't just oppose aid to Jonas Savimbi's troops in Angola; he attacks "U.S.-sponsored terrorism" fueled by our "anticommunist obsession."

As for Libya, Jackson said we failed to exhaust the option of "Arab mediation" before striking, and are ignoring "the context of the Middle East struggle." More specifically, he lambasted Reagan for failing to telephone Alice Ford, the mother of the soldier killed in the explosion at the Berlin disco. "All she got was a form letter with a 22-cent stamp," he said. For his part, Jackson has already called Mrs. Ford several times and sent his surrogates in Michigan to visit her at home. What group will Jackson try to bring into the rainbow next? Perhaps he'll propose a bailout for travel agents and stewardesses, whose livelihood has been disrupted by declining European tourism. Don't laugh—Jackson alluded to their plight.

THE CAUSE-MONGERING is perennial. Jackson's new emphasis is on procedure. Most of the convention was consumed by relentless discussions of credentials and bylaws, and was run according to strict parliamentary procedure. Jackson is determined not to let the disorganization that marred his 1984 bid hurt his chances in 1988. Don Rose, a Chicago political consultant who attended the convention as an observer, says that Jackson is intent on the idea that the Rainbow Coalition be well managed in a way Operation PUSH never was.

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Jackson is observing a semantic distinction between the coalition and his 1988 campaign. He admits the group is a "vehicle," although he doesn't quite say for what. He does suggest that he will make an announcement in early 1987 about whether he is running. Most observers assume Jackson is hoping for a tighter race, where he can "broker" the Democratic nomination with a few hundred delegates. But he's not thinking in those terms, at least at the moment. "He's talking about how he can win with 40 percent of the vote," a source close to the undeclared campaign says. "And Jesse seems to actually believe that."

JACOB WEISBERG

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

SNUBBING THE SOVIETS

PRESIDENT REAGAN and his top advisers gathered in the Situation Room at the White House April 16 to discuss the SALT II treaty. With a new Trident submarine about to come on line, should the administration dismantle two Poseidon subs in order to continue strict compliance with the pact? No way, argued Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and CIA director William Casey, if only because the Soviets are flagrantly violating SALT II. Better to comply, insisted Secretary of State George Shultz and arms negotiator Paul Nitze. In the middle was Kenneth Adelman, the chief of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, who favored a clear response to Soviet violations but something short of brazen defiance of the treaty.

So the discussion went for an hour. There was the usual handwringing over how the allies, some of them already upset over the Libyan raid a day earlier, might react. Naturally, those favoring compliance were worried about this. But all agreed that the administration must make a tangible protest of Soviet violations, perhaps by accelerating some weapons program not covered by the treaty.

One fear was not raised at all—fear that the Soviets might get into a snit, thus jeopardizing this year's summit between Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the United States. For all the talk in Washington about the summit, it was simply not a factor in the SALT II decision. In fact, it wasn't mentioned at all at the meeting.

This is new. When the administration faced a similar decision on SALT II last year, the summit was very much an ingredient in the decision to dismantle a Polaris sub and stay within the SALT II limits. This was what one aide called an "extra mild" approach, designed to soothe the Soviets and keep a summit on track. "There was a feeling then that 'Gosh, he [Reagan] has never met with a Soviet leader and he really has to,' " says a senior Defense Department official. "Well, now he has. And the need to have a summit has diminished. We have matured."

It's no surprise that a Weinberger aide is cool to summitry. But the sense that a summit isn't all that crucial reaches throughout the Reagan administration. "There used to be a preoccupation with a summit," says a White House aide. "We'd have it in the back of our minds all the time. Nobody mentions it anymore." Says an official who confers with Reagan daily: "If we don't have a summit this year, that's all right with us."

At the least, no one argues that American conduct must be checked to assure that a summit comes off in 1986. "The important point is that a summit is not seen as something you pay for, or something that you constrain your behavior to produce," says a White House official who pushed eagerly for last year's Reagan-Gorbachev session in Geneva. Given this attitude, the notion that the raid on Libya might jeopardize a 1986 summit was "not high on the list of concerns," the Defense official says.

THE FELLOW YOU might expect to be most anxious about summit prospects, and most inclined not to rile the Soviets, is Shultz. Yet when the Soviets called off the May meeting between him and Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze at which this year's summit was to be planned, Shultz responded harshly. He accused them of failing to stop the Libyan terrorist attack on Americans in West Berlin that had prompted the U.S. bombing raid on Libya. He made this accusation on his own, without getting White House approval. "He has enough latitude to kick the Soviets if he wants to," says a White House aide. The notable thing is that he wanted to. "The Soviet Union is calling into question its commitment to the agreement reached at the Geneva summit for an intensified dialogue at all levels," Shultz's spokesman Bernard Kalb added. ". . . They have wasted six months since the [Geneva] summit. If they do not wish to meet [at a new summit], so be it." The vehemence of Shultz's rejoinder to the Soviets raised eyebrows even at the White House.

Why has summitry lost much of its appeal to the administration? One reason is the feeling that the Soviets are playing games with the date for the next summit. At Geneva last November, Reagan and Gorbachev agreed on a summit in the United States this year, followed by one in the Soviet Union in 1987. In December the administration proposed a June date, but the Soviets still haven't answered officially. "The president welcomes a summit in this country, but he doesn't want to be jerked around by Gorbachev on a date," says the Defense official. Gorbachev, on the other hand, prefers a later date in hopes of wringing concessions, particularly on arms control, from Reagan before then. "We want a quick summit so we wouldn't be subject to those pressures for concessions," says a Reagan aide.

July and August were always out as summit months because Reagan and others feel that it's a poor time to show off the country to Gorbachev. September and October are ruled out as well, because Reagan wants to cam-

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paign for Republican congressional candidates and won't have time to prepare. Some White House officials, Patrick Buchanan among them, favored a September or October date, saying Reagan would benefit no matter how a summit went then. If the summit achieved a breakthrough, it would help Reagan and the GOP politically. If Gorbachev stormed out in a huff, that would stir a nationalistic reaction, also aiding the president. Anyway, what's likely now is a November or December summit, assuming the Soviets really want one.

The refusal by the Soviets to agree on a date appears to be irritating Reagan as well as his aides. His public statements on the subject have gotten progressively sharper. On February 11 he declared at a televised press conference that he didn't think Gorbachev was foot-dragging on a date in order to force American concessions. On February 28 he suggested just the opposite. "Negotiations don't all take place just at the negotiating table when you meet," he said. "So I treat some of the things I hear—and I'm sure he treats things he hears about me—that we're both in a negotiating position." On March 11 the president complained to reporters at a White House breakfast that the Soviets hadn't agreed to a date. "If [a 1986 summit] does slip through our fingers, I've got news for them," he said. "There won't be an '87 summit in Moscow." On April 9 he said at a press conference that he had "made one thing plain. The fall months of our election are not going to be months that I will agree to a summit, and I will stick to that."

THERE'S A POLITICAL side to the waning enthusiasm inside the administration for a summit. A year ago Reagan needed a summit to snuff out the idea that he was too belligerent and wouldn't talk to the Soviets. In other words, he needed a summit for the sake of popularity. Now his popularity, as measured in public opinion surveys, is higher than for any president at this stage of his second term since polling began. That relieves a lot of the pressure for having a summit. "Certainly Gorbachev needs it more than Reagan does," says a senior White House official. "Reagan's established his credentials as a man of peace. He's solidified his grandfatherly image. The Democrats can't touch him anymore with that warmonger stuff." And there isn't that much to talk about on what is normally the major subject at summits, namely arms control. Gorbachev is calling for reductions in intermediate-range nuclear weapons, a new position for him, but "he'll have to give up a lot more," says a Shultz associate.

One official in the administration remains reasonably keen on having a summit—Reagan. He has his own reason, and it's not a thirst to sign an arms control treaty. Reagan has the belief that Gorbachev knows nothing about America and will be greatly affected if he is able to "see and feel" the country. Reagan thinks this may cure the Soviet leader of his idea that some evil military-industrial complex, manipulated by the Heritage Foundation and Hoover Institution, runs the country. Reagan's foreign policy advisers consider him naive about this, not taking into account that Gorbachev is a hardened Soviet bureaucrat and Communist ideologue. "How much will Gorbachev really see and feel when he travels here for a few days under heavy security?" a State Department official says. "Not much." Still, Reagan feels Gorbachev might be softened if he comes here for a summit. But the president isn't obsessed on the point. Six weeks ago he held a long meeting with his speechwriters on what he'll be saying this spring and summer. They never brought up the summit as a possible talking point. Neither did Reagan.

FRED BARNES

Nut cases in high places.

LOONY SOUTHERN POLS

IT IS WELL KNOWN that Southerners are apt to be eccentric, and this is especially true, I've found, of Louisiana politicians. The antics of our current governor, Edwin Edwards, are well known due to his trial on charges of racketeering, fraud, and bribery. (He is now being retried in a New Orleans courtroom after a hung jury the first time.) But at least we know where he is. At least during the day.

The theme of mental derangement in Louisiana politicians has been noted since Governor Earl Long. Earl Long was known for the same frenzied gambling trips as our present governor, for betting on the horses, and for always doing things big. When he went to the store (accompanied by a police barricade and an entourage of limousines and guards), he didn't buy just one cantaloupe, he bought 44 cases of cantaloupes.

These rambling and quixotic trips to the grocery store, involving purchases that filled five limousines, continued through his term of office. As A. J. Liebling tells us in *The Earl of Louisiana*, he would stop at a roadside store with his entire state entourage, police lights flashing, etc., and buy his 44 cases. Then his wife would commit him to a mental institution. Then he would escape, and play the horses, and stop at a roadside store and buy 66 lengths of chicken wire. It's not illegal, it's not corrupt, it's just bizarre. Some give the same interpretation of the present governor's activities.

I think that something desperate in the South, brought on partly by the tropical climate, compels them to odd modes of behavior. A friend recalls in her childhood seeing Earl Long drive through Mandeville in a pink Cadillac, accompanied by Blaze Starr, the stripper, on his way to the state institution. Some think the present governor is "a very sick man" (pathological liar, obsessive gambler). The latest Louisiana nut case is the mayor of Alexandria, who was recently taken away for psychiatric evaluation. This February he turned up at the police station early one morning, his hands

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shaking and an eye twitching, making wild allegations.

But wild allegations are not strangers to him. Previously he could be heard on CB radios directing traffic and making allegations to the police all over town. He said he was able to communicate directly with the Kremlin through a ring on his finger. Later he was picked up on a DWI charge, taken away for psychiatric observation, and temporarily removed from office.

In Alexandria I stayed at the Bentley Hotel, where the pols have always gathered when campaigning in northern Louisiana. It was recently restored to its former splendor, after a long and slow demise.

AT THE LOCAL TV station I viewed a videotape of a press conference held by the mayor after he was picked up on the DWI charge. It was a strange performance indeed. He was wearing a tan polyester jumpsuit, spoke in a slow bass-voiced drawl, and kept fooling with various things on a table in front of him.

"Charles," he kept calling out, "Charles, come in here a minute." I never found out who Charles was, but in the middle of answering a question he would drawl thunderously, "Charles, come over here and help me take my boots off." His performance was punctuated by long, sudden silences, more fumbling with things, and straying from the subject. When he did speak, his speech was about five times slower than that of a normal person. "I can't see what you're holding up," he said to an interlocutor in the audience exhibiting the DWI report, "because I'm looking at her legs," referring to a female reporter. He said that he had witnesses who had been in the car with him, who would testify that he had not been drinking. "What witnesses?" asked a reporter. "I'll bring my witnesses to court." The editor showing the tape said that his witnesses were three topless waitresses.

"Charles, come in here a minute," rang out his booming voice. "Come up here and pull this boot off." The mayor exhibited his bare foot on the desk to show its wounds, and then began a period of exhibiting various wounds on his body inflicted during the course of the DWI examination. "I hadn't had but one Bristol Cream sherry at lunch," he then said.

"I love pretty women, but I hate hypocrites," he announced.

I admit I need a haircut," he said (apropos of nothing, after a long silence). "I'm going to get one later."

He called in Velda Lee, a distraught-looking, terrorized finance director for the city, to bring in some papers. The expressions on the faces of those around him, including reporters, was a sort of dull, somewhat cowed amazement, and in some cases alarm. "You know how you get revenge, Charles?" queried the mayor, in his ungodly slow drawl. "Lawsuits." The mayor mentioned the various lawsuits he intends to file. There were dollar bills on the desk, with which he fumbled, emptying his pockets, fumbling with the strange chaos on the desk. I then had to leave, since the editor showing the tape had to cover the story of a retired senator who owns a vegetable stand known as the Old Grey Mule, where he was giving a party.

THE SECOND CHAPTER of this story is my actual personal interview with the mayor. I called the mayor's office, but he was not there. So I called his attorney's office. The attorney was at court, so I asked his secretary if she knew the whereabouts of the mayor. "He had to go pay a speeding ticket in Jena," she said. I called back later to reach the attorney. "I called the mayor's office," I told him, "and he's not there." "That's because they kicked him out, sugar!" The mayor was a hard man to find. It sounded as though he spent his time madly driving all over the state. "I think he's up in Columbia planting some millet," said the attorney. But he gave me a telephone number in Pineville, where I might find him—and I did. Let me also preface the interview by saying that my hostess in Alexandria warned me that the last girl reporter who interviewed the mayor ended up living with him.

So I found the mayor ensconced in a small squalid house on the banks of the Red River in Pineville. It was a Friday afternoon. On the whole he acted very normal—except for the hawk calls. For a good part of the interview he played hawk and crow calls on some type of elaborate radio contraption, at an excruciatingly loud volume, shattering my eardrums.

The mayor said he was now intending to run for public service commissioner against Mr. Lightbulb Powell. His decision to run for this office has to do with what one would have to call a conspiracy complex on his part, involving the utility company, the bank, the press, the DA, the judge, and the chief of police. According to the mayor, at the time of his arrest on the DWI charge, the chief of police had been in hiding for three days when his wife found him in bed with his secretary. The judge lay drunk and in shock. His main conspiracy theory, though, has to do with drugs. He says the policemen are all in on the dope rings, and running Las Vegas-type operations. "If you want dope, just go to the DA's office or City Hall," he said. Gigantic dope rings were the main subject of discussion. The schoolteachers are peddling it. He discussed problems in American aviation—due to drugs, they're all on drugs, he said.

"It looks like we're having an April shower, little lady," he said, noticing the rain. Then a catfish farmer showed up from some neighboring town, a somewhat decrepit old fellow, chain-smoking, signaling the end of our interview.

"Little lady," concluded the mayor, "Carlos Marcello [the reputed New Orleans Mafia boss] once told me he'd be scared to spend the night in Alexandria."

"I'm leaving town right away," I assured him.

My bodyguard (a friend) and I repaired to the Bentley, a.k.a. the Ritz of the Bayou, to contemplate the interview, and then I beat a slow retreat down Highway 1 to New Orleans and the ceaseless trials of the governor.

NANCY LEMANN

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Big spender, big hawk, and big loser.

THE MYTH OF SCOOP JACKSON

BY JONATHAN ALTER

AS RONALD REAGAN began his final rhetorical wind-up in his speech urging aid to the *contras* a few weeks ago, he let fly with that name again: Henry "Scoop" Jackson. Scoop would have wanted *contra* aid. Win one for the Scooper, the president seemed to be saying. The longtime Democratic senator from Washington state, who died in September 1983, has been mentioned in more of Reagan's speeches than Ford, Nixon, Eisenhower, Hoover, and every other Republican president (except Lincoln) combined. In presidential name-dropping, Scoop's up there with John Winthrop and his "city on a hill." And last year he posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

It used to be that a statesman was a politician who had been dead for 15 years. Today it takes about 15 minutes. The Trident submarine named after Jackson in 1984 was only for starters. When the Kissinger Commission on Central America issued its report in 1984, it was dedicated to him. When columnists like George Will want to underline a point (usually about the disorientation of the Democrats), they haul out Jackson, whose picture hangs in Will's study. When an aide to Tip O'Neill last year dared to question publicly the notion of Jackson as a centrist, he was immediately rebuked by Democrats as if he had attacked FDR, JFK, or the Social Security system. To keep the flame pure, there's even a Scoop Lobby—the Coalition for a Democratic Majority—which hands out the Henry M. Jackson Friend of Freedom Award to Democrats like Les Aspin, Charles Robb, and even Claude Pepper, who are more than happy to bask in the association.

The Communists, in their own way, remember Jackson too. At the Geneva summit last year, a Vietnamese reporter rushed up to a group of American correspondents. How could Gorbachev stand to meet with *that man*, that Jackson? he asked with agitation. It didn't make sense to him after everything nasty that Jackson had said over the years about the Soviet Union. Aside from confusing Henry with Jesse, the analysis was accurate enough. Scoop will live on in the demonology of the Soviet bloc.

It's the American canonization that's harder to figure. The most obvious explanation is that Jackson is one of the only politicians of his generation to bequeath his name to a part of his party. "Scoop Jackson Democrat"—you can hang your hat on it. Jackson was strong on defense, particularly when it came to decrying the Soviet threat; unswervingly pro-labor; unswervingly pro-Israel; an environmentalist chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (a less well-known characteristic); and generally supportive of just about any kind of expanded federal program, from legal services for the poor to the Freedom of Information Act.

But because Jackson was the quintessential guns-and-butter man, it's a little peculiar that he would be seen as an ideal for today's Washington. A Gramm-Rudman Democrat he was not. When the Reagan administration tried to pursue only half of his ambitious agenda (the guns part), it still created a historic deficit. Even liberals would agree that his support in the Senate for programs such as food stamps for strikers and a new federal consumer protection agency is now anachronistic. The truth is that from now until the end of the century Jackson's urge to increase both domestic and military spending is a pipe dream—the *extreme* view, as Jackson himself used to say about George McGovern's program in the early 1970s. If you forget the liberal domestic-spending component of Jackson's record, and stress only defense—as many of the current hagiographers do—you've distorted his career. Jackson was never the "centrist" he is now made out to be. He was right of center on foreign policy and left of center on domestic policy.

So if "McGovern Democrats" and "Rockefeller Republicans" are long gone, why the Jackson legacy? The answer has less to do with Jackson himself than with the political objectives of those who would employ his name. Recall the treatment of George Orwell in 1984 (the year, not the book). Liberals and socialists tended to argue that Orwell would be a liberal or a socialist today. Conservatives and neoconservatives tended to insist that he would be a conservative or neoconservative. Whatever the genuflections to his abilities, Orwell's bones were used mainly to prop up political arguments.

For those who invoke Jackson, the goal is more ambitious: to prop up political parties. Scoop is the Republicans' perfect Democrat—a Trojan horse with which to enter the Democratic gates. The details of Jackson's domestic record are swept under the carpet for the purposes of this exercise. The conservative Heritage Foundation, for instance, is dedicated to slashing the size of government—the antithesis of Scoop Jackson's whole career. But by invoking his name, as clever conservative writers such as *Policy Review* editor Dinesh D'Souza and others have done, they can try to isolate liberal Democrats outside the borders of party respectability that *they* (the conservatives) have drawn. This is a critical element of the Republicans' electoral strategy for the future, the old "the party didn't leave them, they left the party" line of argument. It is intended to make anyone

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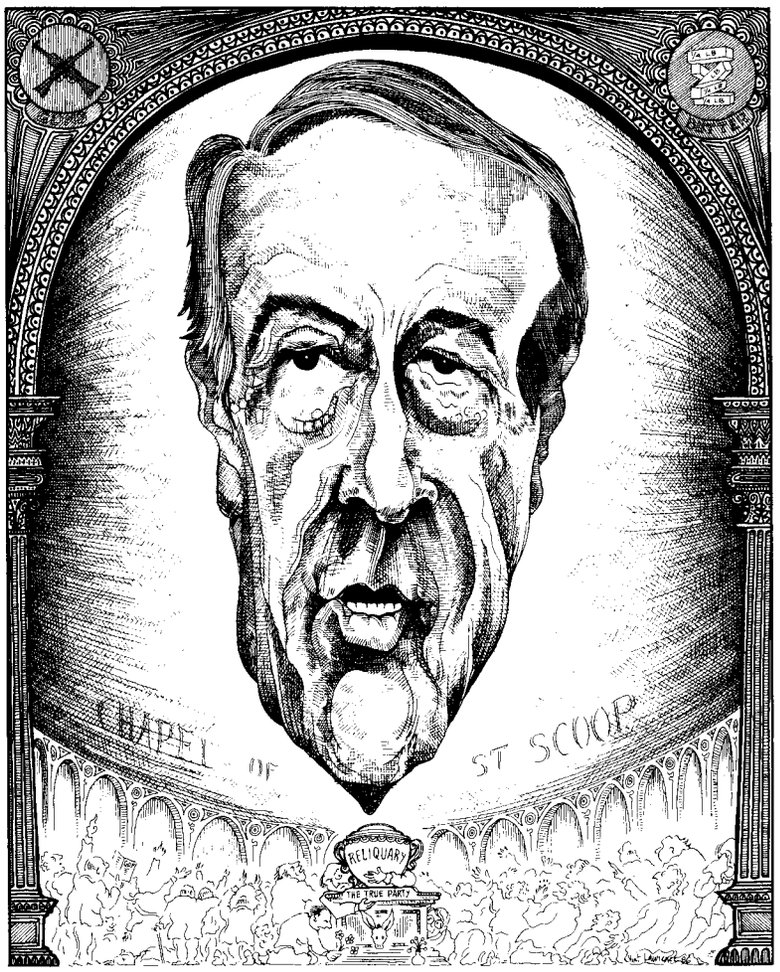
to the left of the Republican Party look dangerously pink.

Imagine if instead of urging Democrats to adhere more to the traditions of Scoop Jackson, the Reagan and George Will crowd worshipfully invoked Hubert Humphrey. That would sound ridiculous. Everyone knows that the Heritage Foundation and Ronald Reagan have nothing in common with Humphrey. But even a cursory look at the record suggests that Humphrey and Jackson represented many of the same things. Indeed, in the late 1960s and early 1970s a "Jackson Democrat" was a sort of poor man's "Humphrey Democrat." In the late 1970s the creature now called a "Jackson Democrat" was most often called a "Humphrey - Jackson" Democrat. Both men stood for unashamed old-style liberalism. Not only has Hubert's name gone down the memory hole, so too has Scoop's support for federally funded abortions and his role in creating the Environmental Protection Agency. When Reagan invokes Jackson, he never seems to mention that the senator's AFL-CIO rating was 94 percent at the time of his death.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

If the Republican ruse is simple politics, the Democratic deification seems more a case of a misreading of public opinion and political history. By almost any standard, the old faith that Humphrey and Jackson nourished is patently out of date. Mondale, Humphrey's protégé, was crushed at the polls, but the Jackson agenda hasn't done much better. The two most important votes in Congress in the past year suggest that the mainstream of the party and of the public believes in exactly the opposite of the Jackson approach—that is, in fiscal conservatism (i.e., passage of Gramm-Rudman) combined with limited interventionism abroad (i.e., no aid for the *contras*). Polls show that voters want a strong defense, but not at the expense of arms control. Who inside the Reagan administration has done more to block arms control than any other official? Richard Perle, Jackson's protégé and current literary aspirant. One can argue about the rightness or wrongness of Perle's approach, but it is unquestionably out of step with a majority of the country, not to mention the Democratic Party.

And that's what's at issue here—political appeal. Because the argument for a Jacksonian restoration as spelled out in speeches and columns rests less on the merits of his views (which are presumed by his boosters) than on the assumption that the liberals' presidential losing streak requires the Democrats to go the Scoop route or face—here's the boilerplate—"minority-party status well into the 21st century."

The question of who's the real dinosaur isn't hard to resolve. For 40 years Jackson was a sort of "Concrete Democrat" in the Grand Coulee tradition. Until the very end of his life, when he supported some Reagan administration budget cuts, it was as if no problem—foreign or domestic—had ever been invented that could not be handled with a simple injection of large sums of taxpayer money. His consistency on this point has often been held up as a virtue, but it had a plodding, unreflective quality to it.

Jackson's *idée fixe* was born not in Munich but in Norway. As a young congressman in 1945, he traveled to the land of his parents and saw two things he said changed him forever: a nation as vulnerable to the Soviet Union as it had been to Nazi Germany, and a national health-care system that saved his life when he caught pneumonia during the trip. The cast of mind established there and represented by the word "liberalism" was allowed to harden as the world changed. Even Scoop himself realized that he was a little slow to shed the baggage—or at least the nomenclature—of the past. Daniel Patrick Moynihan tells a story from 1976, when he and Jackson campaigned together in the Midwest. One night they sat with their feet propped up, and watched Democratic presidential candidate Morris Udall labeling himself a "progressive," not a liberal. Jackson turned to Moynihan and said, "I may not be a liberal, but at least I call myself one."

That's probably the funniest thing Scoop Jackson ever said. He was a warm, loyal friend, but the list of uproarious anecdotes about him isn't lengthy. Even among those trapped in the same ideological amber, Scoop doesn't measure up. He had little of Humphrey's zest or even of Lane

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Kirkland's urbane intellect. And as a public speaker, he was a snore. "When Scoop Jackson gives a fireside chat," the old saw had it, "the fire goes out."

The gibe is a reminder that Jackson never won much national popularity. The man now glued together and mounted as the model Middle American Democrat couldn't make any headway in Democratic presidential primaries, the only test we have—however imperfect—of true national support. His 1972 and 1976 campaigns were both disasters. In the key Florida primary in 1972, he lost badly to George Wallace. His only electoral victories ever outside Washington state came in crowded fields in Massachusetts and New York in 1976. In Massachusetts he won 23 percent of the vote, mostly by pandering to the antibusing vote. In New York, where he spent a fortune and was expected to win a majority, he won a disappointing 38 percent of the vote, largely on the strength of his pro-Israel record. Soon after, he was easily driven out of the race by Jimmy Carter in Pennsylvania, exactly the type of blue-collar labor state where he should have done extremely well.

Even as a shell for all of the party's neoconservative elements—his essential role that year and in 1972 and 1980 as well—Jackson failed. In national politics it seemed that practically every Jackson supporter was either actually working for him—like columnist Ben Wattenberg—or simply interested in him as a poor second choice to Humphrey. "Jackson has a serious problem which has plagued his national campaigns," wrote Peter Ognibene in a 1975 biography. "He attracts relatively few campaign workers." About the only journalists who ever considered him a first-tier candidate were Rowland Evans and Robert Novak. A friend of Jackson from Seattle told Jules Witcover in 1976 that Jackson's charisma problem resembled the troubles of a well-known dog food manufacturer. The chairman of the dog food company assembled his staff and told them, "We make the best dog food. We use the best ingredients. We have the best container. We have the most attractive label. Why doesn't it sell?" After a few minutes, a solitary voice spoke up from the far end of the table: "Dogs don't like it."

SO SCOOP JACKSON didn't embody his party emotionally, his supporters may respond. He did politically. Back in the glorious days of muscular liberalism, we're now told, Jackson represented the Democratic center on foreign policy and defense issues. That would still be the center, the analysis continues, had it not been for the onset of the rabble-rousing McGovernite forces, who steered the party to the left of its traditional roots.

The truth is that even in the old days Jackson was on the right side of the foreign policy mainstream, even among Democrats. In making the case that he was a liberal in the 1950s, Jackson often pointed to his opposition to Joe McCarthy. But in fact his public criticism of McCarthy didn't come until the Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954, when it was quite safe to speak out. In 1960 Jackson was among those who convinced John F. Kennedy to use the "missile gap" issue in his campaign for president. In later years he admitted that no gap had existed. (Jackson argued that the Democrats that year simply used information leaked to them by Eisenhower administration officials.) After being passed over for vice president by JFK, Jackson campaigned faithfully as chairman of the Democratic National Committee—an entry on his résumé often mentioned as a way of cementing his place in the old Democratic center. But he held the post for only a few months during the 1960 campaign, and later did little to help when Southern conservatives blocked the Kennedy legislative agenda on Capitol Hill. Jackson voted for the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, one of Kennedy's proudest accomplishments, with extreme reluctance.

AND OF COURSE he supported the Vietnam War from beginning to end, bitterly breaking with fellow Democrats on issues like the Cooper-Church Amendment to cut off funding for the extension of the war into Cambodia. Was Scoop right on those issues in retrospect? That is not to ask who was right on the true nature of the Vietcong, or the Vietnamese communists, or the boat people, or communism in general. The fact that Jackson may have been more prescient on those issues than left-wingers says nothing about the basic question of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, which looks much the same with the benefit of hindsight. It's hard to believe that any more than a tiny minority of Democrats still believe Jackson was right about the war. That matters in any evaluation of what a future Democratic foreign policy should look like.

Other old issues also resonate in the present. After turning down Richard Nixon's offer to be secretary of defense in 1969, Jackson championed the administration's fight for the antiballistic missile, an early version of "Star Wars." He pushed hard for a Supersonic Transport as a national security goal that would also help his aerospace constituents. Jackson lost on that, and Britain and France built the Concorde. Had he won, the United States also would have been able to boast of wasting billions of dollars on a plane to get businessmen home a bit earlier for dinner.

But how about his constant call to arm against a growing Soviet threat? He warned that the Soviets were embarking on a huge military buildup, and in fact they were doing approximately what he said, a major point that today's liberals are often reluctant to concede. But conservatives are similarly reluctant to concede that the Scoop Jackson approach for dealing with that threat has been a failure. The much-debated 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which restricted trade with the Soviet Union until it loosened up on Jewish emigration, was criticized at the time by Henry Kissinger and others as an assault on détente. But the amendment's real problem was that it didn't work. Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union did rise from 13,229 people in 1975 to a high of 51,294 in 1979, but in the 1980s emigration declined again to new lows. In 1985 the Soviets let out only 1,141 Jews. Meanwhile, Jackson's preferred military response to the Soviet buildup—fixed percentage increases in overall Pentagon spending—did not cause the Soviets to back off. Nor did it improve American military prepared-

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ness as much as it should have. For all of his hawkishness, Jackson didn't show much interest in whether or not all the weapons he wanted to buy really worked.

Some old friends believe that had Jackson lived longer, he would have found himself alongside Barry Goldwater questioning the Pentagon for the first time in his life. "I detected no enthusiasm on his part for the way things were moving. None. He didn't think they [Reaganites] were very subtle or well informed," says Moynihan, who notes that he ran for the Senate in 1976 in part as a way of continuing the Jackson campaign. John Lindsay, a *Newsweek* correspondent who covered Jackson for years, says that today's mythology is misleading. "I'm not sure Scoop Jackson would have been, quote, 'Scoop Jackson.' He was for a strong defense, all right, but not for spraying the world with weaponry." Who can know for sure? Jackson's real legacy may well take the full 15 years to probate. In the meantime, the Democratic effort to find new approaches is deemed heretical by avatars of the old thinking. Scoop as plaster saint keeps getting in the way.

Why Star Wars may be a higher form of Mutual Assured Destruction.

MADDER THAN MAD

BY LEON WIESELTIER

AMONG THE Reagan administration's many contributions to the history of American illusion, historians will record its successful attempt to persuade the American public (and a large part of the American political class) that the Strategic Defense Initiative marked a departure from some previous American hospitality toward nuclear war. That hospitality, according to the official account of the nuclear age, was called Mutual Assured Destruction, or MAD. Until March 23, 1983, when Ronald Reagan announced the attempt to make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete" by means of defenses against them, the policy of the United States was to prevent a nuclear war by promising to destroy the society of the Soviet Union. And, the *faux-naïf* account continues, from this sinister situation Reaganism recoiled in horror.

MAD is morally intolerable and strategically senseless, the administration concluded. And so it proposed its extravagant and epochal revision. Not the offense, but the defense, shall deter war. Although nobody, except possibly the president, believes in the possibility of perfectly protecting the men, women, and children of this country from the nuclear warheads of its enemy, the faith in some form of significant protection of earth from space, of protection significant enough to free us from the curse of Mutual Assured Destruction, remains strong.

The administration flatters itself. The horror of nuclear war is as old as the nuclear age itself, though the prominence of that feeling in the policies and politics of Ronald Reagan is a novelty. And almost all of the administration's ideas for transcending what used to be called the balance of terror are just as old. As soon as the full, foul lethality of nuclear weapons was appreciated, the attempt to limit it was launched. The administration is distorting the past. Except for a few of McNamara's months at the Pentagon, MAD was never the operational policy of the United States. MAD is not a name for a strategy; it is a name for a reality.

Intellectually, the attempt to relieve the United States of MAD took two forms. There was the idea of precision and the idea of invulnerability. By the 1960s both of these ideas were maturely developed; the Reagan revisionism in nuclear strategy is battening off a rich inheritance of impatience with MAD, even as it pretends to have invented the impatience. The problem for the earlier generation, however, was a lag between strategy and technology. The concepts for something less than a Soviet-American suicide pact existed long before the devices required for it. But the scientists are now catching up with the strategists; Reagan is merely presiding over the moment. Both the idea of precision and the idea of invulnerability seem suddenly within the reach of technology. Not enough within its reach to free us from the nuclear fact of our life—as long as we know how to make these weapons, we will live by our nerves—but enough to encourage some very noble nonsense.

The idea of precision has gone by many names in the swiftly changing semantics of nuclear strategy: "counterforce," "flexibility," "damage limitation," "selectivity," "discrimination," and so on. Essentially it means making nuclear war more like conventional war, first by withholding American strikes from cities and other population centers, second by increasing the accuracy of nuclear weapons and decreasing their power of destruction. (That power is known, in a fine nuclear Orwellianism, as their "yield.") The promise of precision is of something less than total destruction, though in practice the difference between a large "counterforce" attack and MAD may be meaningless.

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The idea of invulnerability is not about offense, but defense. In its weak version, it proposes to thwart a Soviet strike against American military targets by protecting them. Such protection may include everything from the physical hardening of missile silos and command centers to the more flamboyant directed-energy weapons in space that the administration so ardently admires. In its strong version, it proposes to protect all or most of the American population, again by means of extraordinary space-based technology. The promise of invulnerability, like the promise of precision, is of something less than total destruction; and in its utterly fantastic formulation, which is usually the president's, it is a promise of no destruction at all.

The idea of precision is incarnated most popularly in the MX missile, and more perfectly in the Midgetman missile, and more perfectly still in the D-5 missile (launched from submarines, which are almost impossible for an attacker to find), and most perfectly in the cruise missile. The idea of invulnerability is supremely incarnated in SDI. Although the precise "architecture" of SDI is hard to pin down, all its configurations appear to involve the deployment of offensive and defensive instruments of warfare in space.

The Reagan administration is passionately committed to both of these systems, to the "modernization" of the ICBM force by means of the MX and to the defense of American military and civilian sites from space. (Its commitment to the Midgetman is lamentably less firm, for reasons that have to do with Star Wars.) What seems not to have occurred to our planners, however, is that these commitments may grossly contradict each other. In fact, when you consider carefully the strategic environment that would result from SDI, you are led to conclude that SDI is directly opposed to the logic of precision and to the logic of invulnerability. In truth, the Reagan administration's achievement may be the perfection of MAD in the name of transcending MAD. SDI as the best thing that ever happened to MAD: the irony would be delicious if it weren't so dangerous.

II.

THE MOST RIGOROUS employment of the principle of precision against MAD has been made by Albert Wohlstetter. He argues that there has been a "revolution in precision" so great that we may now develop nuclear weapons that need not be characterized as weapons of mass destruction. There are two ways, Wohlstetter observes, to improve the effectiveness of our nuclear arsenal: "When one improves effectiveness by releasing more destructive energy, there is a corresponding increase in collateral damage. When one improves the ability to destroy a target by increasing one's accuracy, there is a corresponding decrease in collateral damage."

For reasons of morality (who can support "the slaughter of innocents"?) and of strategy (who can rely upon "the rhetoric of indiscriminate threats"?), Wohlstetter rightly argues for accuracy:

> Improvements in guidance using midcourse adjustments have already reduced cruise-missile accuracies to 200 feet from the 12,000-30,000-feet average misses expected for ballistic missiles in the late 1950s. That improvement by a factor of 60 to 150 makes feasible radical reductions in collateral damage. Even more important, terminal guidance systems in development now [1983] that could be deployed in the late 1980s could further reduce inaccuracies at extended ranges by another order of magnitude.

Here, in the technology of terminal guidance, lies the new opportunity for the old strategy of overcoming MAD through "counterforce," of aiming weapons at other weapons rather than at people. Of course, the threat of mutual assured destruction isn't quite overcome, even by bullet-like accuracy. First, accuracy isn't the same as reliability; there can be no certainty about the actual behavior of missiles in an attack, and a large calamity may result from a small malfunction. (The "collateral damage" of the American raid against Tripoli a few weeks ago resulted from the straying of state-of-the-art missiles that were confused by clouds.) Second, many Soviet military targets are located in or near Soviet population centers; the Soviets may be forgiven for mistaking an attack on their cities in the name of "counterforce" for an attack on their cities, period. Third, the danger of "escalation" to a catastrophic level of conflict remains after a "discriminate" attack. The most that precision can provide is the possibility that World War III will not begin with the end. Fourth, making nuclear weapons less destructive may make them less inhibiting to use. What strategists think of as "low yield" is quite high enough to qualify for a nightmare.

Fifth, and finally, the ability to strike more precisely amounts also to the ability to strike first. The assurance that one's society may not be destroyed during a war is a little vitiated by the anxiety that one's forces may be destroyed at the beginning of a war. Hence the famous American fear of a Soviet first strike, which profited Ronald Reagan so handsomely in 1980. The "accuracy race" seems to have been run; the Soviets, too, can strike more "discriminately" against our own military installations.

STILL, IF PRECISION will put off the apocalypse, by leaving both sides with something to lose, and therefore with a reason for concluding the war, it will have done a lot. It may also firm up deterrence, by making the threat of retaliation "credible" (they may not be deterred by our threat to kill ourselves too) and less immoral (we may not be guilty of genocide, if deterrence fails). Thus Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger boasts, in the current *Foreign Affairs*, that "our Administration has accelerated the development of more selective, discriminate, and controlled responses. . . . We have already rendered obsolete one of the concepts of the MAD logic: the belief that deterrence must rest on the threat to destroy a certain high percentage of the Soviet population. . . . Indeed, we

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believe that such a doctrine would be neither moral nor prudent."

But there is a premise to precision of which the administration appears to have taken no notice. It is: open skies. For counterforce to work, morally and strategically, American planners must assume the absence of Soviet interference with a "discriminate" attack. American missiles must be able to reach their smaller and more specific targets; and the Soviets must be able to discern that we have made a smaller and more specific strike. In a world of strategic defenses, however, offensive precision will be impossible. Interference with attacks will be the rule.

THE ADMINISTRATION is agitating for a strategic environment in which its very accurate ICBMs can be intercepted at any point in their terrible trajectory, from "boost phase" to "midcourse" to "terminal phase," over the territory of the attacker, in space, and over the territory of the attacked. Systems of the sort envisaged by SDI will make open skies a thing of the past. What can you do with your ICBMs when you are confronted by an adversary with a "layered" defense? You can do one thing, and one thing only: you can barrage. You can rain your ICBMs down upon your adversary's head and hope that some of them get through, and maybe even land where you wanted them to land. *And that is MAD.*

It is incoherent, in short, to insist upon both the MX and SDI. The latter will have the consequence of removing the former's reason for being. But countermeasures, the administration will say. There will be countermeasures, which will make it possible to thwart a significant portion of the adversary's defenses. To be sure. But will the countermeasures suffice, not only to "punch a hole" in their defenses, but also to restore the certainty of our counterforce-targeting policy? For certainty is what such a policy requires. American missiles must not merely survive and straggle out of Soviet defenses; they must also strike exactly where they have been instructed to strike. If they strike anywhere else, if they hit not the airfield but the town near the airfield, not the silos but the schools, they will have committed . . . mutual assured destruction. They will have slaughtered the other's innocents and invited the other to slaughter our own. All that countermeasures can accomplish, all that defenses can accomplish, is the transformation of a smart attack into a dumb attack, of a missile that left the atmosphere over the United States as a "silo buster" of the 1980s into a missile that enters the atmosphere over the Soviet Union as a "city buster" of the 1960s.

There is an assumption, however, according to which the simultaneous embrace of the MX and SDI, of the logic of precision and the logic of defense, makes sense. It is the assumption that only the United States will have both. This is an assumption that is commonly made in Washington. Planners and pundits cheerfully discuss the matter of SDI as if our defense of ourselves is all that is under discussion. At least the president understood correctly, in his Star Wars speech, that the SDI vision must include a defended Soviet Union, too. It may be, of course, that American defensive technology will be finer than Soviet defensive technology, at least in the early years of the mutually defended world. Still, history shows that the Soviets generally catch up with alarming alacrity. In fact, their totalitarianism may even make up for their technology. It is not hard to imagine a general-secretary of the Soviet Union proceeding with the furious development and deployment of a defense of his people and his weapons on earth and in space, while a president of the United States pleads with Congress for a little "point defense."

Nor is that all. The MAD of a defended world will be more dire than the MAD of a defenseless world. In a defenseless world, there are more intelligent and less intelligent, more destructive and less destructive, ways to design a nuclear attack. Though all of them be bitter, we have "options." A nuclear war may not even destroy the world. In a defended world, however, no attack can be designed. It can merely be made, with prayers. Mutual assured destruction will be *all* that is possible.

III.

THE ABSURDITY OF MAD, according to its critics, lies in the proposition that there is safety in vulnerability. MAD seems to suggest (particularly in its classic text, the ABM Treaty) that in the nuclear age there is greater risk in protecting what you value than in exposing it. This turns ancient strategic wisdom, as well as common sense, on its head. And so the architects of a post-MAD world are committed to the idea of invulnerability, either of our weapons or our people or both.

The vulnerability of American forces to a Soviet strike is an old worry. Sometimes the worry was proper, as in the case of the famous RAND study of the vulnerability of American air bases in the early 1950s. Sometimes it was spurious, as in the case of the "missile gap" that helped elect John F. Kennedy. Most recently the worry has taken the form of a window—the "window of vulnerability" that helped elect Ronald Reagan. In this season of swagger it is hard to recall the alarmism of the first Reagan term, when the highest officials in the land behaved as if it were only a matter of time before the Russians "took out" our land-based ICBM force in a perfectly executed first strike and it was red dawn in America.

The Scowcroft Commission of 1983 retired the alarmist analysis by pointing out that the vulnerability of the ICBM could be corrected by making it mobile, and therefore harder for the Soviets to find. The commission urged, moreover, that we also make the Soviets less keen to find it, by reducing the number of warheads on the mobile missile to one, and thereby making it a less attractive target. The Midgetman, as the mobile single-warhead missile came to be called, remains the soundest way to secure and to stabilize our land-based strategic force. Finally, the commission soberly observed that the fear of the first strike was really a way of sowing panic in the population—that despite the vulnerability of the ICBM, "to deter such

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surprise attacks we can reasonably rely both on our other strategic forces and on the range of operational uncertainties that the Soviets would have to consider in planning such aggression."

THE SCOWCROFT Commission also acceded to the administration's demand for the MX. It recommended, in stunning contradiction to itself, that 100 MXs be deployed in the very Minuteman silos whose fixity was precisely the reason for the ICBM's vulnerability. At the time there were those who denounced the report as a cynical exercise in politics, as an intellectually fancified means of giving the president what he wanted. The administration's policies since Scowcroft give credence to the criticism. Its lukewarm attitude toward the Midgetman is a scandal of national security. Officials who proudly proclaim their support for Star Wars look you straight in the face and say that Midgetman is too expensive. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who has made a career out of his concern about ICBM vulnerability, told the London School of Economics last February that the $1.4 billion appropriation for Midgetman in 1987 (an appropriation that was spared the Gramm-Rudman guillotine by a last-minute act of clemency) would be better spent on SDI. Suddenly it doesn't seem to matter that Midgetman would finally close the window.

The truth is that there are certain supporters of SDI who want to keep the window open. The competition between Midgetman and SDI is not merely for money. It is also for the proven political prestige of the fear of the first strike. This fear is being fanned back into life by those who cannot bring themselves to accept the president's fantasy of a perfect shield, but also cannot bring themselves to be banished from the charmed circle of SDI. Zbigniew Brzezinski is the best example. He has suavely argued, in these pages and elsewhere, that SDI is necessary to frustrate a Soviet first strike. He says it "would render the Soviets' new generation of accurate missiles useless." (No mention of the fact that their defenses will render our new generation of accurate missiles useless, too.) This is ridiculous. The United States can disrupt a Soviet first strike, and therefore sufficiently complicate Soviet planning for it, by means much more modest than the pharaonic programs of SDI. We can make our missiles mobile, we can build "point defenses" around them, we can deploy other kinds of traditional ABM systems, and so on. For the purpose of protecting our forces, there is no need to go into space.

The SDI thesis, however, is that we must find solutions in space for problems on earth. In the name of invulnerability (of weapons, in the Brzezinski version, of citizens, in the Reagan version) we will station weapons in space, and increase our dependence upon satellites in space by many orders of magnitude. While there already exist familiar ABM technologies for the interception of missiles from below (the Galosh system around Moscow, for example), the innovation of SDI, the technological thrill of it, is the interception from above. An attack against a missile in "boost phase," that is, on its way up, and in "midcourse," can be accomplished solely from space, since we cannot "see" the launch and early flight of Soviet missiles from American soil.

Such interceptions will require certainly hundreds, and probably thousands, of satellites. For a satellite is in position to attack a missile for only a fraction of its orbit. A small fleet cannot keep the Soviet Union covered at all times. Richard Garwin and Hans Bethe have estimated that it would take "1344 satellites of 0.5 retarget time in optimum orbit . . . working perfectly reliably" to defeat a significant Soviet attack—and that is "perfectly reliably." (Brzezinski claims that all SDI's missions require is 100 satellites, which amounts to a sort of "minimum deterrence" in space. Brzezinski's number assumes that the tin will work without a hitch, and also that the Soviets will not modernize or multiply their forces.)

The problem with such a decisive dependence upon satellites is that they are paltry things, perhaps the most perfect targets in nuclear history. Their orbits are fixed. The ways of attacking them (ASAT) are many. They can be attacked from below, by the Galosh interceptor or something like it; by nonnuclear interceptors launched from fighter jets (the United States tested such a "miniature homing vehicle" a few years ago); by ground-based laser weapons, which particularly worry the Pentagon's annual report on Soviet military power; by space mines, which are small, cheap, and easily proliferated; even by steel pellets, dumb but deadly for the mirrors in space that a directed-energy defense will require.

Moreover, from the standpoint of satellite survivability, SDI is divided against itself. There is a fateful overlap between the technology of antimissile defense and the technology of antisatellite offense. Most systems built to destroy missiles can be used (more easily, even) to destroy satellites. What's more, you don't have to destroy a satellite to prevent it from functioning; its supremely sensitive optics and electronics could be ruined by the thermal and electrical shocks produced by explosions far away.

IT IS INTERESTING, then, to compare the vulnerabilities of the great sitting ducks of our day: the ICBM in a fixed silo and the satellite in a fixed orbit. The comparison is warranted by the claims of the administration and its apologists that ICBMs on earth can be saved by satellites in space. The results of the comparison are interesting.

* A missile is on sovereign soil and a satellite is not. To attack a missile in its silo, therefore, is to start a war. To attack a satellite in its orbit is to start something less, though very grave.

* You cannot harass a missile in its silo, but you can sidle up to a satellite in its orbit and travel alongside it, for the purpose of inspecting it or irritating its proprietors. (For this reason it has been suggested that the United States and the Soviet Union must negotiate "keep-out zones." It is hard to understand why people who believe that the Russians will not honor the rules of the road on earth believe

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that they will honor them in space. Anyway, there is no "keep-out zone" like your own territory.)

* A missile may be "modernized," but a satellite is forever trapped in the era of technology in which it was launched. You cannot call it back and improve it. You can only launch a new one, presumably with "counter-countermeasures" that increase its survivability.

* A fixed missile may be made mobile. A fixed satellite already is mobile. In space, mobility in orbit is a form of fixity.

* Satellites are ambiguous in a way that missiles are not. As Ashton B. Carter has written, "satellites [that] do not carry weapons and do not shoot anything . . . can directly support military operations." And the "benign" satellites are just as vulnerable as the "threatening" ones. Thus the chances of crisis in space, the occasions for fear and uncertainty, exceed those on earth.

There is also a larger historical consideration. Whereas the United States and the Soviet Union are equally dependent upon ICBMs, for deterrence and for the hell after deterrence, the United States is more dependent than the Soviet Union upon satellites. The reason is not simply SDI, though that will certainly deepen the dependence. It is, rather, that the military and political commitments of the United States are geographically more dispersed than those of the Soviet Union, which enjoys the proximity or the contiguity of most (and maybe all) of its vital interests. We need higher and better eyes and ears than they do. Moreover, intelligence about a closed society is much harder to obtain than intelligence about an open society. We also need more eyes and ears than they do. We are more threatened, in short, by ASAT.

IN EXCHANGING the vulnerabilities of missiles for the vulnerabilities of satellites, then, we may be exchanging a rattling nuclear regime for a more rattling one. Still, a number of objections may be offered. First, it may be argued that satellites in high orbit are much less vulnerable than satellites in low orbit, and maybe even invulnerable. True, but almost all of SDI's missions require satellites in low orbit, between 200 to 1,000 kilometers high, well within the reach of ASAT weapons. Next, it may be argued (though it will be a strange argument to hear from the Reagan administration) that arms control for ASAT is the answer. But arms control cannot be the answer, not merely because ASAT weapons can be developed and deployed covertly, but also because ICBMs themselves may act as ASAT weapons; and we know how well arms control has controlled *them*.

Finally, it may be argued that there are indeed "counter-countermeasures," ways of protecting satellites against attack. And there are. A recent report by the much-maligned Union of Concerned Scientists lists five: "ablatives [hardening of the satellite surface against lasers], maneuvering, concealment, redundancy, and shooting back." But hardening will not protect the exposed components of the satellites, such as their mirrors and sensors, and it will make the satellites almost impossibly heavy, and it can be matched by more powerful space mines; maneuvering will not work as swiftly as the speed-of-light weapons directed against the satellites, and space mines can follow the maneuver; concealment will probably not work for all of the system, and the offense need find only a few satellites to disrupt the whole defense, and anyway, satellites are very large and their orbits are very predictable; redundancy will cost, well, the earth, and weapons to attack the redundant satellites are much cheaper than the satellites themselves (which, of course, is a fundamental flaw with the whole idea of SDI); and shooting back will not work against "single-shot weapons," such as X-ray lasers, and it is unlikely that a satellite will be able to defend itself against attack *and* attack the ICBMs that it was put in space to attack.

This is not to say that we will never be able to make satellites survivable. It is to say only that we cannot make them survivable now, or in the near future. In the debate about defenses, therefore, the burden of proof is not on ASAT, or on the ability to attack satellites. We have such an ability, and so do they. The burden of proof is on DSAT, or on the ability to defend satellites. Until the administration can demonstrate that it can deal with the danger in space, it should not pretend to have reduced the danger on earth. It has merely moved the mutual hostage relationship to the heavens.

ONE OF THE oddest delinquencies of this administration has been its failure to worry about imperiled satellites with anything like the intensity with which it worried about imperiled missiles. "Despite continuing concern at the vulnerability of U.S. space assets," writes Paul Stares in his splendidly written and scrupulously researched book *The Militarization of Space: U.S. Policy, 1945-1984*, "the level of effort to improve satellite survivability remained low relative to the value of the satellites." When I called the Office of the Strategic Defense Initiative last month, I was assured that satellite survivability is one of "General Abe's" [Lt. Gen. James Abrahamson, the director of SDI] highest priorities: "If not number one, then number two or three." I was referred to the Pentagon's annual report for satisfaction. There I found something called "SLKT," or "survivability, lethality, and key technologies." It is fifth of the five "program elements" of SDI, it is given nine little lines, and all that it offers the anxious reader is this sterling sentence: "These issues must be resolved before any future decisions with respect to possible development and deployment may be addressed."

Ronald Reagan is not transcending MAD. He is celestializing it. Before the celestialization of MAD costs the American public any more trust or treasure, the administration should be made to answer to its own cherished criterion for strategic systems, which is the criterion of survivability. Giving the offense the advantage in space is no way to rob the offense of the advantage on earth. Forget the window of vulnerability. Ronald Reagan is giving us the skylight of vulnerability. □

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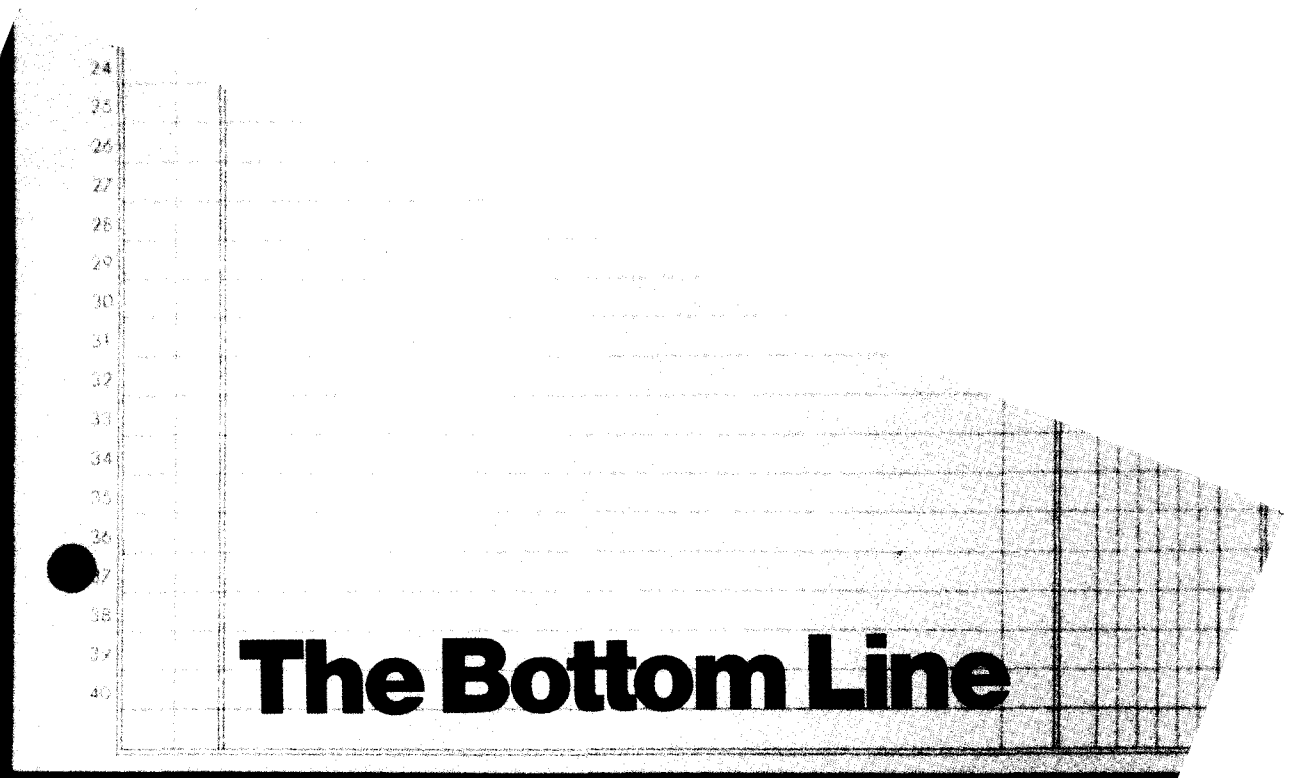

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Harsh Contradictions

A recent letter from a reader complimented me on not having "gone to pieces" over the homosexual element in *My Beautiful Laundrette* as, said the letter, other reviewers had done. I no longer read many film reviews so I wasn't aware of those other disintegrations. But the letter made me realize that the possibility of going to pieces had never occurred to me: and then I began to wonder why it hadn't. In other words, why had I accepted the homosexual love affair simply as a love affair? It was notable to me only because this minority manifestation of love (which, statistically, it is) seemed especially apt for a film about minority social circumstances in general. But the love affair hadn't begun to test me in any way. Why not?

Desert Hearts
(Samuel Goldwyn)

Dona Herlinda and Her Son
(Cinevista)

A major reason, of course, is social. To have lived in New York during the past 30 years is to have seen homosexual lives come out of closets and out of much more luxurious hiding places. I, like everyone else, have seen the publications, the bookshops, the gay-pride parades, the legislation against prejudice. At universities I've seen the homosexual clubs, male and female, the gay bars, the gay film festivals. In the theater I've seen many, many plays about homosexuals, most of them (like most plays in general) dreadful, but occasionally (*Torch Song Trilogy*, for instance) of true importance. I've read about gay houses of worship in several faiths. And I've seen contemporaries of mine discover that children of theirs are homosexual. Most telling and conclusive of all (this is far past cliché), some of my best friends are homosexual. Since they *are* my friends and *are* homosexual, it was up to me—not up to them—to alter. In short, like all people of my generation who were reared with prejudices on the subject, I, a person of patently maculate goodwill, have been forced by social mutation, by reason, and by affection, to change.

But that's only one set of reasons. Another reason for looking at that recent film without discomfort is the change in film itself during the last 25 years. "Before 1961," Stephen Farber wrote (*Saturday Review*, October 1981), "the Production code, Hollywood's censorship ordinance, forbade any hint of 'sex perversion.' When the code was finally revised to allow discreet treatment of homosexuality, the first movies on the subject—*Advise and Consent* and *The Children's Hour*—depicted gays as repressed and miserably unhappy." Since then, of course, the number of homosexual films has swelled, and the treatment of homosexuals has acquired an emotional and psychological range virtually as wide as that used for heterosexuals. The homosexual film now exists.

The crassest proof is the strongest. *Variety*, April 9, 1986, has a long story with a full-page headline: "Gay-Themed Features Hot B.O. Stuff." One of the distributors says, "The gay audience is nothing to sneeze at," and there is evidence that "crossover" audiences are also supporting gay films.

For 24 hours I lived in willed ignorant bliss on the subject. The next day, April 10, I saw a segment of "20/20" (ABC) about gay-bashing, which is virulent throughout the country, freshly fueled by panic about AIDS. The segment began with diatribes from Jerry Falwell and a couple of other compassionate Christians, then went on to interview some of the haters, some of the victims (shockingly beaten), some officials of homosexual groups reporting on conditions. We can't tell ourselves that this hatred is small-town, redneck stuff: much of the harassment and violence is in big cities. The viciousness that has always been there and that may perhaps have been lightly lulled has been exploded again by AIDS—which is, I need hardly add, grossly misunderstood. The last shot of the segment was of a girl of about ten in a crowd, shouting the word "pervert." Freeze-frame of a child's face fixed in venom.

So, on this subject as on so many others, our country contains two harshly contradictory movements. In this case, it seems to be a nine-to-one conflict: according to "20/20," about 20 million Americans are estimated to be homosexual, or about one out of ten. And in the light of the success of gay films, limited but solid, that conflict becomes all the more scary—even fantastic. Suppose that, in these days of the smash success of *The Color Purple* (whose quality is not the issue here), "20/20" had shown a segment about the tarring and feathering of blacks, about black lynchings. One's sense of reality would be at risk. For a moment after the TV homosexual segment, I almost felt I had to check the calendar.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

My Beautiful Laundrette. Discursive but humane, funny, moving comedy-drama about Pakistanis in London today. Well written, acted, and directed. (Reviewed 4/7/86)

Shoah. Now available in more cities. Claude Lanzmann's documentary about the Final Solution—almost ten hours, shown in two parts—supplies the presence no text could give us: testimony of survivors and participants. (10/28/85)

Smooth Talk. After an hour of platitudinous stuff about a 15-year-old girl's bickerings and gigglings, we get a frighteningly true half hour about what happens when reality arrives too early in adolescent fantasy. (4/28/86)

Turtle Diary. An exquisitely played game, in which the players are also the pieces. Two Londoners return large turtles from an aquarium to the sea. Script by Harold Pinter, acting by Glenda Jackson, Ben Kingsley, Michael Gambon. Caviar. (3/10/86)

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Luckily, as phenomena if not as artworks, two more homosexual films arrive—almost like a matched pair, one each about females and males.

The female pair are in *Desert Hearts*, set in Reno in the 1950s. A Columbia University professor of English, a woman in her mid-30s played by Helen Shaver, goes to a ranch near the city to do her six-week residency for divorce. The ranch owner, Audra Lindley, has an attractive daughter, Patricia Charbonneau, who works in a casino by night and lives in a separate bungalow on the ranch, where she sculpts by day and where she brings women to stay with her. Charbonneau falls in love with Shaver almost on sight: eventually she persuades Shaver to recognize her true sexual self.

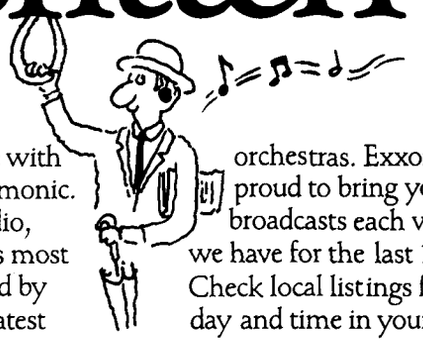
The credibility of the facts is not in question; the credibility of the film is out of the question. No mention is made of Shaver's husband or the quality of the marriage she wants to end, but at least this is a sin of omission. The committed sins are worse. The dialogue in Natalie Cooper's script, adapted from a novel by Jane Rule, seems to have been typed with one finger. (Cooper's idea of how professors speak: in the middle of a tiff, Shaver draws herself up and says, "I'm a recognized scholar.") Charbonneau is passably passionate, but Shaver, reserved or abandoned, is a stick. Donna Deitch directed with an oppressive clumsiness that suits the whole enterprise.

Dona Herlinda and Her Son is a Mexican film about a wealthy widow in Guadalajara who looks quite conventional and, in an extended way, *is* conventional. She simply enlarges her conventionality so as to keep her life well ordered. Dona Herlinda has a son, a successful neurosurgeon, whose lover is a male music student. Without overtly countenancing the relationship or even mentioning it as such, Dona Herlinda says that the two young friends ought to be able to enjoy each other's company more easily, so she invites the musician to live in their home.

But Dona Herlinda also wants grandchildren. She knows an eligible young woman whom the son finds congenial and who likes the musician. Dona Herlinda builds a new house with two wings: one for the male lover, thus keeping that relationship discreet, the other for the married couple so that they can produce a child as soon as possible.

Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, who di-

Travel to Britten



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rected, himself adapted a story by Jorge Lopez Paez. The direction is smooth, the cast is smooth, the story flows smoothly. The total smoothness demonstrates that sufficient money, along with sufficient goodwill, can produce pleasant order out of what might otherwise have been disorder, content out of what might have been misery. The film's subtext is its one bitterness: what about homosexuals who don't have mothers with Dona Herlinda's goodwill and money?

TIME'S LINES

Less Than One: Selected Essays by Joseph Brodsky

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 501 pp., $25)

Time is far greater than space.
—Joseph Brodsky, "Lullaby of Cape Cod"

It was almost exactly 22 years ago that an unknown young man by the name of Joseph Brodsky was summoned before the Leningrad court on the charge of "social parasitism"—that is, writing poems while neither belonging to the Soviet Writers' Union nor holding a steady job. "But who determined that you're a poet? Who accepted you into the ranks of poets?" went the judge's cross-examination. The defendant's answer: "I guess it's . . . from God. . . ."

This timid response, which would have been considered glaringly obvious by Dante, George Herbert, or Rilke, sounded, under these circumstances of history and geography, like a provocation. Brodsky was immediately punished with exile to a kolkhoz near the Arctic Circle. At the same time he was rewarded with international publicity, which to all intents and purposes saved his skin. Eight years later he "switched Empires" (as he puts it in one of his American poems). The globe made a half-turn and the exiled poet found the Western Hemisphere under his feet. This other Empire, to be sure, is far more propitious to poets; at least it does not require police registration or certification of employment stamped on an identity card.

Yet Brodsky's response, if repeated on American soil, would sound provocative here, too. In the Soviet Union you are a poet because you have been granted permission to be one by the appropriate authorities. In the United States you are a poet because no authority can prohibit you from being one (more exactly, from enrolling in a course in creative writing, publishing two poems in *Chattanooga Review*, and winning a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts). In either case, God (who in this context is just shorthand for poetic calling) seems to have nothing to do with writing poems.

Which perhaps accounts for the fact that Brodsky, with his intense convictions about poetry and poets, is a unique figure in the world of letters. He is distinguished not merely by his talent, or by his one-of-a-kind success story. (He is, to my knowledge, the only example of a Russian poet who succeeded in achieving bilingual status in the West; there was Nabokov, but he had been fluent in English since his early childhood, and Brodsky is far more of a poet than he was.) What also sets Brodsky apart is his overtly expressed belief that a poet has a special mission to accomplish in contemporary society. Not just in a totalitarian society of the Soviet sort—there, the poet's mission, his role as a spokesman for the voiceless community, is something traditional and, unnatural as the entire situation is, natural. He also has a mission in an open, democratic society that seems to be doing just fine without poets. The citizen of both hemispheres, Brodsky is concerned with nothing less than the place of the poet in the global system of civilization.

Less Than One, a hefty volume of Brodsky's essayistic output during his stay in the West, reflects the sweep of his interests in what appears to be a whimsical diversity of subject matter. The protagonists here are, first of all, poets—Russian giants of poetry or prose such as Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva, Dostoyevsky, and Platonov, but also Western poets like Cavafy, Montale, Auden, and Derek Walcott. The "protagonists" are cities as well—Constantinople (in "Flight from Byzantium"), Cavafy's Alexandria, Brodsky's own Leningrad (in three more or less autobiographical essays, "Less Than One," "A Guide to a Renamed City," "In a Room and a Half"). Finally, the "protagonists" are certain apparently extraliterary problems—tyranny (in "On Tyranny") and evil (in "A Commencement Address"). The essays span an equally wide range of genres, from personal reminiscences (the Leningrad essays) and a combination of travel notes with historical reflection (the Byzantine essay), through an obituary (the essay on Nadezhda Mandelstam) and a public address ("A Commencement Address," actually delivered at Williams College), to critical portraits of poets and extensive analyses of single poems (Tsvetaeva's "New Year's Greetings" and Auden's "September 1, 1939").

Yet one detects a peculiar unity in all this thematic and generic hodgepodge. I don't mean the kind of unity that is customarily characterized, in such cases, by the vague label "an intellectual autobiography." True, this is, directly or indirectly, Brodsky's self-portrait. But the more essential unifying theme in the book is its concern with the profession—or better, vocation; or better still, calling—that he represents. In fact, *Less Than One* is a series of variations upon a theme. Who is the poet? What is poetry? What is their function within the system of civilization?

AS WITH every work of verbal art, it is possible to read Brodsky's essays in two intersecting ways. We can read them in their linear sequence and at the same time read "crosswise" by spotting recurrent motifs and thematic threads that stretch from one essay to another. The most important thread is the function of poetry. (That function, incidentally, is defined in a rather broad fashion. It may include not only lyricism, but also a kind of prose characterized by heightened self-consciousness of language and represented, in the Russian tradition, by the fiction of Dostoyevsky or Platonov and by the nonfictional prose of Tsvetaeva or Mandelstam.) Everything that Brodsky has to say about poetry stems from two basic assumptions. The first seems to be disarmingly obvious: whatever else can be said about a poem, the only sure thing that can be said is, with Mallarmé, that a poem is composed of words. Accordingly, "the

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poet is the one who masters language." Poetry is "the supreme version of language," its "highest form of existence." Such lofty expressions are justified in that poetry is—or at least can be—much more than just a verbal skill:

> In purely technical terms, of course, poetry amounts to arranging words with the greatest specific gravity in the most effective and externally inevitable sequence. Ideally, however, it is language negating its own mass and the laws of gravity; it is language striving upward—or sideways—to that beginning where the Word was.

Consequently, "A poem is the result of a certain necessity; it is inevitable, and so is its form." Hence the colossal weight that Brodsky attaches to those determinants of poetic speech that are considered by a superficial reader to be merely decorative fringes. For him, rhyme, alliteration, meter, stanzaic pattern are by no means irrelevant ornaments. Rather, they are signals of the "inevitability" that separates a poetic utterance from the chaotic randomness of everyday speech. (This conviction lies behind Brodsky's extremely critical attitude toward the prevailing American practice of translating poetry—even poetry so "linguistically oversaturated" as Mandelstam's—into bland prose divided into lines.)

IN SHORT, "lyricism is the ethics of language." At this juncture, Brodsky's first, "linguistic" assumption dovetails with his second, "ethical" one. Being a moralist of language, the poet comes into unavoidable conflict with non-ethical (or even, more often than not, anti-ethical) external reality. His lyrical attitude sentences him to the continuous experience of the "unacceptability of the world," as Brodsky puts it in one of the essays on Tsvetaeva. This encompasses far more than the world in its social or political dimensions:

> A poet gets into trouble because of his linguistic and, by implication, his psychological superiority, rather than because of his politics. A song is a form of linguistic disobedience, and its sound casts a doubt on a lot more than a concrete political system: it questions the entire existential order.

The outcome of this clash is a natural companionship between lyricism and individualism. Of course, the poet's individualism, his constant "estrangement," may lead in extreme cases to his isolation, solitude, or even physical annihilation. But it may also, if realized and consciously cultivated, become "the art of

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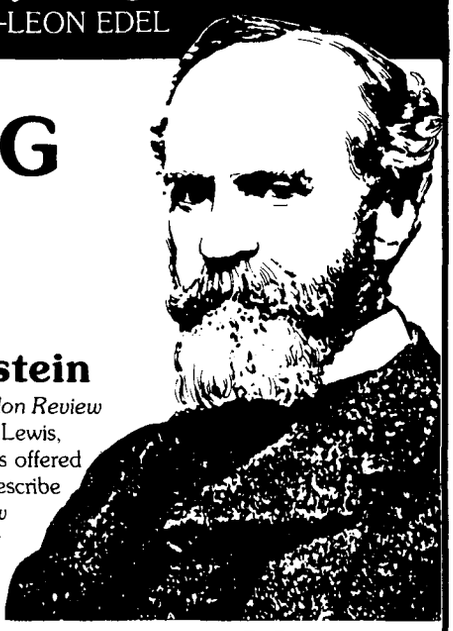

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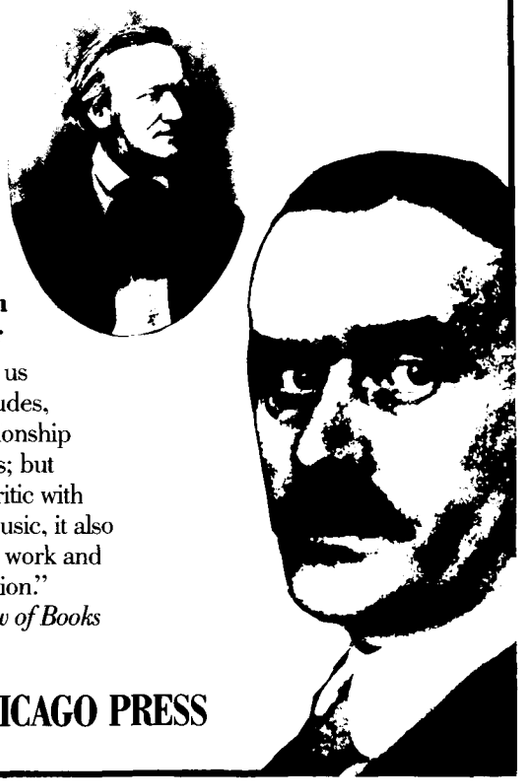

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estrangement" and thus serve as a driving force for creativity. The motif of "the art of estrangement" is clearest when Brodsky turns to autobiography, particularly when he speaks of his coming of age in Leningrad. In fact, however, it is a common denominator for all of his essayistic portraits of Eastern and Western poets: not only the tragic lives of Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva, and Akhmatova, but also the careers of Cavafy and Walcott, both representative of the "provinces" or "outskirts" of civilization as opposed to the "metropolis."

Here we hit a paradox, though. It is that the notion of lyricism as "the ethics of language," and more generally the individualistic attitude, condemn the poet to isolation; at the same time, however, they are the most precious gifts that the poet can offer to society. Individualism, as Brodsky points out in "A Commencement Address," can be a curse, but it can also serve as a defensive weapon:

> ... the surest defense against Evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even—if you will—eccentricity. That is, something that can't be feigned, faked, imitated. . . . Evil is a sucker for solidity. It always goes for big numbers, for confident granite, for ideological purity, for drilled armies and balanced sheets.

Individualism is a safeguard not just against the immediate, tangible evil of the surrounding reality, but also against the evil that lurks beneath the surface of every utopia, only to raise its head when the utopia is being transformed into reality. Unlike various utopians, Brodsky spent 32 years of his life in a country where such a sobering transformation had taken place; he cannot help but be anti-utopian. In his view, every utopia, based on Rousseau's notion of the inherent goodness of human nature, overlooks the "human negative potential." The result of such an oversight is that the "negative potential" is given free rein, and usually ravages souls and continents with impunity, until it finally tramples the very idea of the autonomy of the individual.

IN WHAT sense, however, can poetry's "ethics of language" serve as a similar defense against evil? It is at this point in his line of reasoning that Brodsky the essayist is most original and revealing. In his view, poetry, while reorganizing language, reorganizes time as well: "Song is, after all, restructured time." Even at its lowest level—at the level of phonetic material—a poem

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"carves notches" on the time axis by dividing speech into rhythmic units and thus giving the elusive flow of moments some appearance of regularity and sense. Likewise, at the highest level—at the level of the whole of literary history—every poem is a "notch" on the axis of historic time by necessarily relating to both tradition and the future. Inasmuch as this "carving of notches" or restructuring of time is "a profoundly solitary activity," it forces the individual "toward an understanding, if not of his uniqueness, then at least of the autonomy of his existence in the world." And the notion of the autonomy of individual existence, after all, is no longer an individualistic trait. Rather, it is "the basis of our civilization."

IN HIS magnificently thought-provoking "Flight from Byzantium," from which I have quoted the above words, Brodsky gathers all the themes and strands of his essayistic work and, helped by the symbolism provided by history and geography, binds them together in a complex knot. What promises to be just a tourist's notebook—a record of impressions from a trip to Istanbul—expands into a series of reflections on the mutual incompatibility of two models of civilization.

The opposition of space and time, an obsessive and sometimes puzzling theme in Brodsky's poetry, here becomes clearer as it is supplemented with a series of other, parallel oppositions. The Eastern model of civilization (the fullest historical embodiment of which was Byzantium) is interpreted as a system based on the "linear principle," on the dominant notion of space, on contempt for the individual. Its fundamental mode of activity is territorial expansion, and its archetypal hero is a conqueror or a tyrant who rules over wide expanses of land. In contradistinction, Western civilization replaces the "linear principle" with the idea of cyclic return. Not space but time—in both its existential and historical dimensions—becomes the dominant category here, which results in a turn toward individualism. The restructuring of time is the fundamental kind of activity, and the archetypal hero is none other than a poet.

Needless to say, Brodsky never bothers to abide by the rules of neutrality or objectivity. On the contrary, he declares his sympathies and antipathies. A former citizen of the Third Rome and now a visitor to what's left of the Second, he

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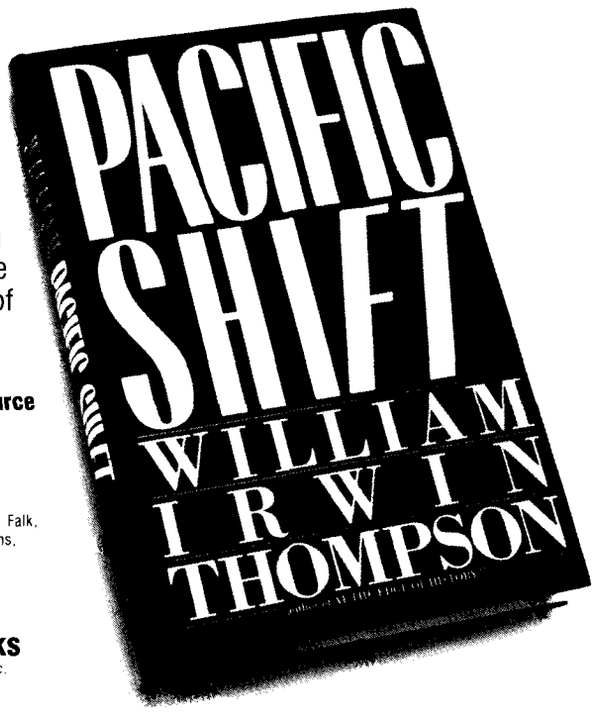

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views both as cradles of "human negative potential." This doesn't mean, though, that Brodsky engages in blind pro-Western idolatry, or that he advocates some kind of ostracism of the other civilization. In fact, he goes so far as to blame the First Rome and its spiritual heritage for the modern world's failure to stop the tide of evil: "By divorcing Byzantium, Western Christianity consigned the East to nonexistence, and thus reduced its own notion of human negative potential to a considerable, perhaps even a perilous, degree."

Whether or not the reader agrees with all of Brodsky's statements (he is the first to admit that he deals more with ideal models than with detailed images of historical reality), "Flight from Byzantium" is the pivotal piece in the collection. In light of this essay, Brodsky's idea of what poetry should be emerges as a direct consequence of his idea of what the world should not be. Presumptuous as it might sound, poetry is for him the exact opposite of—indeed, a counterbalance to—tyranny in its Byzantine version, and even more in its countless modern versions. The poet's individualism is the reverse side of his respect for the autonomy of all other individuals. His mastery of language is a form of respect for the rhythms of existence and history that language contains and preserves. His watchful awareness of the borderline between good and evil opposes the relativistic imprecision of these notions, which is both a precondition and a product of every tyranny.

It seems that Brodsky—a poet whose life and work bridges the banks of the Neva and the Hudson, a poet of two hemispheres and two languages—is one of the very few authors in the West who can risk such a maximalist formulation of poetry's tasks without sounding preposterous or irresponsible. But then Brodsky has always been an author who sets improbable tasks for himself. In his essay on Auden, he describes his decision to start writing in English as a wish "to please the shadow" of the admired poet. After the publication of *Less Than One*, the shadow of the author of *The Dyer's Hand* can be nothing but pleased.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK

Stanislaw Baranczak, a Polish author who came to the United States in 1981, is professor of Polish literature at Harvard University.

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THE POLITICIAN AND THE CLERIC

The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon by Fouad Ajami

(Cornell University Press, 228 pp., $17.95)

For several days last June, the world's attention was focused on the Shiite group that hijacked a TWA airliner. The plane landed at Beirut International Airport, and while most of the passengers were kept in Lebanon's Shiite strongholds, complex negotiations were conducted with the hijackers, who demanded the release of a large number of Lebanese Shiite prisoners held in Israel. International sensitivities had been blunted by repeated hijackings and other acts of terror in recent years, but this particular incident stood out. Its distinctive characteristics—the ferocity and desperation of the hijackers, the unusual role played by American television networks, the difficulty of tracing the lines connecting the hijackers to a distinct political address—prompted questions about the anatomy of Lebanon's political and religious factions. Was it Amal, the militia and political organization of the Lebanese Shia, or Hizbollah, the radical fundamentalist Lebanese Shiite movement, that was responsible? And beyond Lebanon's borders, was it Syria or Iran that was influencing them?

The extensive television coverage provided Americans with vivid images of Nabih Berri, the secular leader of Amal, as well as of his clerical rivals, whose distinctive garb evoked memories of Iran in 1979-80. But too much should not be made of the difference between them. There is a strong fundamentalist component in Amal. In fact, Nabih Berri and Hizbollah's leader, Sheikh Muhammad

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Fadlallah, can be seen as heirs to the two rival personalities—the politician and the cleric—that had competed for the soul of Imam Musa al Sadr. He was the man who first mobilized Lebanon's Shiite community to political action and prominence.

Imam Musa al Sadr is the subject and the hero of this excellent and unusual book. Its author, Fouad Ajami, now a professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, has already had a significant impact on the study of Arab society and politics. In 1979 he published an essay in *Foreign Affairs* called "The End of Pan-Arabism," which stated explicitly what many had felt but did not quite dare to say. His subsequent book, *The Arab Predicament*, offered an extraordinary understanding of the Arab world's political discourse and practices.

His new book continues in the same vein. It is, like many of Ajami's other writings, a very personal work. In the introduction, Ajami introduces himself as a Lebanese Shiite who has lived in the United States for many years. As a young student in Lebanon, he aspired to assimilate into a higher and more prestigious Arab nationalist (and implicitly Sunni Moslem) political culture. Having rediscovered his Shiite identity, however, he brings to his book a personal passion, tempered often (but not always) by academic discipline. When Ajami writes of the Shia's quest for acceptance and respectability in the Arab and Islamic mainstream, of their drive to transcend marginality and inferiority, of hurts and insults inflicted in earlier years, he clearly does not need to step into anybody else's shoes.

Ajami is not an orthodox historian, and in tracing the evolution of his book's central themes he does not use the historian's conventional tools and techniques. The present is not a higher floor resting comfortably on a carefully constructed skeleton. It is a point of departure, rather, from which to investigate earlier and more esoteric layers—the origins of Shiism and of the symbols that are still moving its adherents today; the Shiite universe of the early 20th century, which linked the small community in Lebanon to the larger centers in Iraq and Iran; the society and politics of South Lebanon and their transformation. *The Vanished Imam* is constructed as a series of concentric circles. At its center is the figure of Musa al Sadr; he is surrounded by the stories of Lebanon's Shiite community, of Lebanon's political system, of the larger Shiite community in the Middle East, and of the regional political arena.

Musa al Sadr's life is the stuff of great drama. An Iranian cleric of Lebanese descent comes to Lebanon and becomes the leader of an underprivileged community—the largest in number, the weakest politically. A charismatic leader, tall and handsome, the foreign cleric builds an institutional base within his new community, and then seeks to transform its place on the national stage. In the process he makes many enemies, but none more dangerous than Yasir Arafat. As Ajami suggests, the PLO felt that the mobilization of the Shia in the south jeopardized its "alternative homeland," the autonomous territorial base it had established north of the Israeli-Lebanese border. The story ends in a way that is ironically appropriate to the branch of Islam that anticipates the return of its missing Twelfth Imam, with the disappearance of Musa al Sadr in the summer of 1978, while on a visit to Libya. Conclusive evidence may never be available, but the facts marshaled by Ajami suggest that Qaddafi had the Imam killed, as one of his many services to Arafat and the PLO.

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Hogue concludes, "The rule of law, the development of law by means of judicial precedents, the use of the jury to determine the material facts of a case, and the definition of numerous causes of action—these form the principal and valuable legacy of the medieval law to the modern law."

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Musa al Sadr the man emerges from the narrative as an unusually complex figure—a cleric from the very heart of the Shiite religious establishment who was more interested in politics and action than in the pursuit of religious knowledge, a tolerant *mujtahid* who spoke in churches, a charmer of men and women, a passionate defender of his community who never neglected to promote his own personal career. Ajami also carefully raises the possibility of a darker side that the Imam's detractors have sought to emphasize—Musa al Sadr's alleged American and Iranian connections, the exact nature of which have yet to be clarified.

Ajami has done very well in keeping a balance that biographers often lose. He recognizes that the impact of his subject's actions was due in part to their coincidence with larger forces. Musa al Sadr's efforts to mobilize the Shia of Lebanon, for example, were greatly aided by the emergence of a prosperous class among them seeking status and recognition, and by the collapse of the traditional Lebanese system. As Ajami notes correctly, a decade earlier the same man would hardly have left a mark on Lebanon. The success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, moreover, and the chain of events triggered by the 1982 war in Lebanon, posthumously magnified the significance of al Sadr's career; and the circumstances of his disappearance facilitated the birth of myths and legends.

LEBANON'S Shia have played a major role in the country's politics in the past few years. As the book poignantly shows, they contributed to the failures of both America's and Israel's policies. As a result, the community acquired a prominent place on the national political stage—almost, but not quite, commensurate with its demographic strength. But the rapid pace of events has slowed. Amin Gemayel and the Maronite community are proving more resilient than their mistakes and shortcomings had earlier suggested, and Syria, the Shia's partner and patron, is treading softly on already familiar quicksand. How, then, is the community to proceed in the present circumstances?

Nabih Berri and Muhammad Fadlallah and their movements—the successors to the two contradictory strands in Musa al Sadr's legacy—present very different replies to this question. Berri is essentially a secular Lebanese politician. He does not reject the Lebanese state and its confessional system, according to which political power is distributed to religious denominations, but he insists that the Shia be given their fair share in it. As a realistic politician, he knows that the reconstruction of the Lebanese state is not likely to take place soon. His strategy is clearly to develop an area of Shiite autonomy stretching from western and southern Beirut to the Israeli border, while continuing the drive for a greater Shiite share in whatever central institutions the Lebanese state still has. Implicit in his strategy, finally, is a cautious attitude toward Israel. Berri and his supporters know full well that active warfare conducted by Palestinians or radical Shiites from South Lebanon against Israel is bound to revive the vicious spiral of the years 1977 to 1982.

Fadlallah, as depicted by Ajami and others, thinks in wholly different terms. Lebanon is not to be a secular (if confessional) polity, but an Islamic republic. The Shia, through their demographic mass, greater devotion, and external support, will crush the others. The fight against Israel must continue even after the last Israeli soldier and adviser have left South Lebanon, because it is the Moslem's duty to liberate Jerusalem. As in Musa al Sadr's case, however, it is difficult to separate genuine religious convic-

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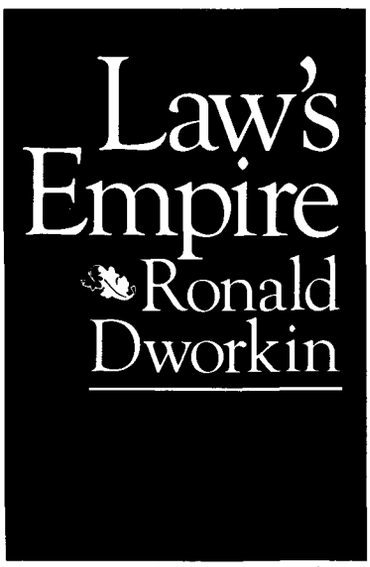

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tion from political expediency. Fadlallah may be advocating this radical line partly as a challenge to Berri's authority; in power a more sober line might prevail.

The different strategies are tied to different external orientations. As Ajami points out, all the major Lebanese communities have traditionally depended on foreign patrons. This is particularly true of the weak and marginal Shiites. In recent years, Syria, the dominant neighbor, and Khomeini's Iran, seeking to export its revolution, have been the Shia's two main partners. It has been a complex and awkward trilateral relationship. Iran and Syria have been allies of sorts in the larger Middle Eastern arena. As part of this relationship, Assad has allowed Iran's emissaries to build a radical Shiite enclave in the Bekaa Valley. Yet Assad, a cautious leader who fights Islamic fundamentalism at home and seeks exclusive control in Lebanon, is clearly uncomfortable with the radical Iranian clerics and their Lebanese clients. Berri sees Assad as a source of support against the radicals in his community, but he also knows that he and his community are, in Assad's scheme of things, mere figures to be moved on a chessboard directed from Damascus.

THE PLO sometimes appears as a fourth party to this relationship. The Shiite-Palestinian tension is an important theme in Ajami's book. It goes well beyond the struggle for control of South Lebanon, and even beyond Musa al Sadr's disappearance. The PLO leadership was the ally (eventually the captor) of West Beirut's Sunni Moslem political leadership, the core of the very establishment the Shia sought to dispossess. In a broader sense, it symbolized what the Arab world could do for an underprivileged group—and what it chose not to do for Lebanon's Shia. "Stepchildren of the Arab world, the Shia fought Israel with zeal," Ajami writes of the 1983-85 period. "In the fury with which they fought, they exercised their historical sense of being excluded from the mainstream of Arab history." The contrast with the PLO was quite stark: "The Arab world had invested some of itself and its wealth in the Palestinian cause; then in the aftermath of 1982 the Shia turned out to be more formidable enemies of Israel than did the PLO."

In the present circumstances Nabih Berri appears as the carrier of this traditional Shiite outlook. The tradition is reinforced by a clash of concrete interests. Amal's efforts to take full control of West Beirut encountered stiff Palestinian resistance in Sabra and Shatila, and it views Palestinian efforts to launch attacks against Israel proper from South Lebanon as jeopardizing its quest to build an autonomous Shiite area there. Hizbollah's outlook, again, is different. Various Palestinian groups are its natural allies in the effort to radicalize the situation and transform it.

Still, Ajami suggests that there is a broader meaning to the Iranian-Syrian-Lebanese Shiite relationship that transcends ordinary political calculations of the day. There is a revolutionary dimension to Shiite Islam too, which derives from certain components of its doctrine and history, but also from its refusal to be regarded as heterodox, or worse still heretical. If Shiite Islam is not essentially different from the religious mainstream, what is it that has set it apart? Ajami quotes a revealing passage from an essay written by al Sadr: "The main reason for the official pressure against the Shia in history was the fact that they were an elite minority with a total view of an Islamic order that was at odds with the dominant regimes throughout Islamic history."

Given the fact that the Alawites who dominate the Syrian Baath regime—Assad is an Alawite—are members of a Moslem-Shiite sect that until the 1950s had been the downtrodden of Syrian society, it is tempting to explain at least some of the events of the past decade as a Shiite and rural challenge to the traditional Sunni and urban order of Arab society. This is slippery ground, however, and Ajami walks it carefully. But the questions he raises are likely to remain central; he is challenging some of the fundamental assumptions with which many Arab and Western students of Arab history and politics have worked in recent decades. The Shiite community in Lebanon remains torn between Musa al Sadr's successors, and the secular-minded Berri seems hard put to fend off his more radical competitors. In South Lebanon the slender balance achieved after Israel's withdrawal could easily collapse. And developments in Iran, and on the Iranian-Iraqi front, could once again place Iranian clerics at the heart of the region's politics.

ITAMAR RABINOVICH

Itamar Rabinovich is the director of the Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University, and author of *The War for Lebanon: 1970-1985* (Cornell University Press).

YEATS IN LOVE

The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, Volume I, 1865-1895 edited by John Kelly, associate editor Eric Domville

(Oxford/Clarendon Press, 548 pp., $29.95)

This first book of Yeats's letters, in a projected edition of 12 volumes or more, is wonderfully edited by John Kelly. It brings the poet to the year 1895, when he was 30. Yeats is revealed to be, even in youth, a man of much more force than his early poetry would suggest. His verse was at that time mostly supplicatory, idealizing, and slow. The letters present him as busy, clubbable, and political.

After he left art school at the age of 21, Yeats had to live by his pen. His father, who had left the Irish bar to become a painter, urged him not to take on any regular work, fearing that it might dampen his fire. But Yeats could barely scrape through; in a number of these letters he asks for loans or apologizes for not repaying them. Still, his spirits are good, his ambition high. He gathers subscriptions for his first book (*The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems*, 1889), he edits fairy tales, he copies Aesop's Fables in the Bodleian Library for a publisher, he edits with a collaborator the works of Blake, he foments plans for an Irish library, he disagrees boldly over the selection of books for it with Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, a mid-century hero of Young Ireland.

Appropriately for a lyric poet, his correspondence with women has unusual interest. He makes a quite up-to-date criticism of the heroines of Swinburne, Rossetti, and Morris, that they have no separate lives of their own. In his own

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verse, women do have separate lives—"man-picker Niamh" or the revolutionary Maud Gonne. His letters to women begin with Mary Cronin, to whom he sends a poem when he is 17. On April 27, 1887, he begins a lengthy correspondence with the poet Katharine Tynan; for two-and-a-half years she is "Dear Miss Tynan," and then at last he asks whether he may call her by her Christian name. (His own letters are invariably signed W. B. Yeats.) At first he complains that she doesn't write frequently enough. Eventually she makes the same complaint.

On February 1, 1889, his life changed with the arrival of Maud Gonne, complete with a pet monkey and two pigeons in a cage, to visit the Yeats family. Though Yeats denies in a letter that he is carried away by her, obviously he was. The letters show, however, that his skepticism of her extremist politics was present from the first; he mistrusted "the red Indian feathers" with which she "trapped out" her nationalist feelings. He seems also to have recognized that her intelligence was not of the first order. But these things did not matter. He was hopelessly in love. He enlisted her support for his Irish library, brought her into his magical order, The Golden Dawn, and courted her whenever she was in London or Dublin. Unknown to him, however, she was leading a separate life in Paris, where she bore two children to Lucien Millevoye, a journalist whose politics as a follower of General Boulanger were also extremist. Though Yeats heard bits of gossip about her, he loyally disbelieved them, and only in the late 1890s did she confide in him. Fortunately, by the end of this volume he has encountered Mrs. Olivia Shakespear, destined to be his first requited love. From complimenting her on her delicate novels, he gradually and with excessive delicacy brought her to bed.

Since Yeats very early became an enemy of "the starry men," or astronomers, by whom he meant scientists in general, it is amusing to read the opening sentences of his first recorded letter, written to a sister in 1876: "I have two water lizards in a jar a glass one. They eat the worms I gave them first but they spit them out now. I had some frogs too but I let them out because I did not know how to feed them." He soon takes sides against science, against reason, against even George Eliot's "analysis." He disapproves of the educational system for offering "great mills called examinations" to destroy the imagination.

W. B. YEATS BY JOHN SINGER SARGENT

"The only business of the head in the world is to bow a ceaseless obeisance to the heart," Yeats declares in one of his first epigrams. Yet he is not so much on the side of emotion as would seem to follow. He suddenly realizes and regrets that his poetry is almost all a "flight into fairyland, or a summons to that flight." It is full of "longing and complaint" when what he wants to write is poetry "of insight and knowledge." Partly to counter his own impulses, he sets himself to write a short novel called *John Sherman*, and tells Katharine Tynan that it is "full of observation and worldly wisdom or what pretends to be such." The qualification is engaging.

What was present in his mind almost from his earliest letter was a desire to justify the imagination by proof of its power. The primary exhibit, of course, is poetry. But he also wants to make phenomena respond to his beck and call, and for that purpose he reads mystical literature and joins occult organizations. It was easy to be attracted to theosophy when that extraordinary woman Madame Blavatsky brought it to London in the mid-1880s. She had no doubt that matter was subservient to mind. Inspired by her, Yeats did some rather simpleminded experiments with other members of the Blavatsky Lodge. Madame Blavatsky stopped them, feeling they were likely to discredit her, and Yeats gave up theosophy in favor of the more experimental Golden Dawn.

His father did not like these activities, and his old Fenian friend John O'Leary also urged him to abandon them. Yeats defied them: "It is surely absurd to hold me 'weak' or otherwise because I chose to persist in a study which I decided deliberately four or five years ago to make next to my poetry the most important pursuit of my life." He goes on:

> The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write. It holds to my work the same relation that the philosophy of Godwin held to the work of Shelley and I have always considered myself a voice of what I believe to be a greater renaissance—the revolt of the soul against the intellect—now beginning in the world.

They could hardly oppose his work on Blake, which depended for its interpretations upon his occult studies. Yeats

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was the first to try to make the Prophetic Books coherent. He did not succeed, but others have followed his lead. There is always sense in his attitude, as when he explains his introduction to a book of Irish fairy tales: "Perhaps the fairies exist. Certainly an assumption of their existence is the only fit theory to build a selection of fairy tales on." His practicality and his mysticism go together.

The personal traits disclosed in the letters are endearing. He is shy with women, stubbornly independent with established men. When *Oisin* appears, he asks what young people like or dislike in his work: "The people of my own age are in the long run the most important." He wants his work to be considered and reviewed as Irish. In old ballads, he says, poets can find new ways of expressing themselves. He will not renounce meter—although he admires Whitman—for he likes forms old enough to have been sung by men half-asleep or riding upon a journey. His affection for the west of Ireland is such that he says, "Down at Sligo one sees the whole world in a day's walk, every man is a class." He worries that the characters in *John Sherman* will turn into eastern symbolic monsters. When he shaves off his beard, Madame Blavatsky warns him that he will lose all the mesmeric forces that collect in a beard, and will fall ill. He puzzles over how much to tip, and to avoid giving too little, gives too much.

There are also inklings of later poems. In one poem he published in a magazine and did not reprint, for example,

> Come and dream of kings and kingdoms,
> Cooking chestnuts on the bars;
> Round us the white roads are endless,
> Mournful under mournful stars.
>
> . . .
>
> Kingdoms falling, kingdoms rising,
> Bowing servants, plumed wars,
> Weigh them in an hour of dreaming
> Cooking chestnuts on the bars,

it is possible to see embryonic anticipations of "Lapis Lazuli" and of "Meru" ("Egypt and Greece, goodbye, and goodbye, Rome"), though he obviously has need of a grander scene than chestnut cooking.

John Kelly's editing of these early letters is such that nothing goes unexplained. The notes provide, often wittily, historical details about the 1880s and 1890s that no one has previously compiled. Kelly has performed many extraordinary feats of research. The biographical notes at the end are well written and helpful, and the analytical index on Yeats is just what is needed.

RICHARD ELLMANN

Richard Ellmann is the author of, among other works, *The Identity of Yeats* (Oxford University Press).

HIGH-CULTURE HUSTLER

The Great Pretender by James Atlas

(Atheneum, 277 pp., $15.95)

Early on in *The Great Pretender*, Ben Janis, James Atlas's young-man-on-the-literary-make, recounts this bit of background about his friend Aaron:

> . . . he was a great fan of Isaac Rosenfeld's novel about a bookish adolescent growing up in Chicago, *Passage from Home*. His mother, Francine, had actually known Rosenfeld; she was supposed to have dinner with him the night he dropped dead of a heart attack in a dank basement apartment on the Near North Side. He was only thirty-eight. Saul Bellow had come to see her once about Isaac, his closest friend since their Tuley High School days. He was writing a memoir and Francine had some of Isaac's letters. They spent the afternoon sorting through them, Francine in her old kimono, Bellow in hundred-dollar loafers and a gray plaid suit from Savile Row. He was sitting at the kitchen table when Aaron got home from school, a small man with soulful eyes and a head of silky white hair. His fedora was beside him on the table. Bellow's hat.

In a sense, those last two words tell you everything that you need to know about this novel. The indrawn breath of reverence, the low salaam before *cher maître*. A more fitting image would be hard to find. For as all of Russian literature was

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said to have come out of Gogol's overcoat, so all of *The Great Pretender* has come out of Bellow's hat.

IN 1977 Atlas published *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet*, a judicious and highly readable biography that seemed to draw upon passionate identification as well as diligent scholarship. Atlas supplied the outward lineaments to complement Bellow's novelized portrayal of Schwartz in *Humboldt's Gift*. Doubtless the biographer came to know that novel intimately. Too intimately, it now appears: it's almost as if the necessary immersion in his subject had as its unfortunate by-product the unconscious absorption of Bellow's prose style. But Bellow is, I think, something more for Atlas than just the creator of Von Humboldt Fleisher. He is a lion, a Jew, a fellow Chicagoan, a Nobel laureate, a generational voice. The Father. Atlas would like to swallow him whole and *be* him—parricide by anthropophagy. Avid as his maw is, though, it's just not big enough.

Please note, I am not accusing Atlas of plagiarism. There are no duplicated sentences or stolen scenes. The matter is subtler. It has to do with emulation—of tone, rhythm, depiction of character and milieu, and less definably, but no less apparently, of spirit. Ben Janis, whose outer trajectory seems to follow Atlas's own (Evanston, Harvard, Oxford), is so completely a precipitate of literary predecessors (eight-tenths Bellow, one-tenth each of Philip Roth and Henry Miller) that there is nothing left over that might have come out of life. Sure, the young man has experiences, but he has been possessed by admirations to the point of personal eclipse. Not a thing that he says or does is natural; every moment is evaluated as grist for art even as it is being experienced. This is the ultimate *cul-de-sac* of self-consciousness.

To document my assertion fully would require volumes and the exposition would be tedious. Here is a single instance. From *Humboldt's Gift*:

> His father had lived in Chicago during the boom. He was in the real-estate business and kept a suite at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. Summers, his son was sent for. Humboldt knew Chicago, too. In the days of Hack Wilson and Woody English the Fleishers had a box at Wrigley Field. They drove to the game in a Pierce-Arrow or a Hispano-Suiza (Humboldt was car-crazy). And there were lovely John Held, Jr., girls, beautiful, who wore step-ins. And whiskey and gangsters and the pillared doom-dark La Salle Street banks with railroad money and pork and reaper money locked in steel vaults. Of this Chicago I was completely ignorant when I arrived from Appleton. I played Piggie-move-up with Polish kids under the El tracks. Humboldt ate devil's-food coconut-marshmallow layer cake at Henrici's. I never saw the inside of Henrici's.

From *The Great Pretender*:

> David and my father had grown up in the same neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago; David's father was a grocer. They'd gone to Carl Schurz High School together. They'd played stickball in Humboldt Park. Now David was a figure in Chicago. He'd made millions in real estate. He was on the board of Northwestern University, a patron of the Chicago Symphony. He visited Chagall in Vence. Larry Rivers did his portrait. His name was on foundation letterheads. When I hear the word Culture, I reach for my wallet.

Listen to the tone, the periodic rhythms; observe the deft mode of summary and the wryly posed contrasts in each. Details are crowded together in a very particular solution of irony and affection. This is Bellow's style, and like all styles it's hard-won. We can watch its evolution from *Dangling Man* on. Though it does not have a copyright, it might as well.

It stands to reason that if Bellow has achieved a remarkable voice, as he has, its appropriation by another might actually result in an energetic, provocative, and entertaining novel. *The Great Pretender*, to be fair, exhibits (at least in its opening chapters) some of these qualities. Young Ben is so eager, ambitious, pretentious, and horny that we occasionally smile in spite of ourselves. At moments the book seems to be a sharp send-up of the whole coming-of-age genre. But Ben's self-involvement is just too great. Finally the satiric distance collapses. After a few dozen pages, we long for something to blast him out of his insufferable condition and into the world. This never happens. And here the Bellow comparison breaks down. For Bellow can get us outside of Augie and Charlie; he can immerse us in the Dickensian swirl of modern urban life. Atlas cannot.

THE GREAT PRETENDER would like to be the "recognition" novel for what used to be known as the "sixties generation." Ben hits young manhood just in time for the Chicago Summer of '68. His is the vita of the era. He is a suburban teen, affluent, liberal, college-bound (Harvard). He is ravenous for any taste he can get of the real thing: life. For he has read about it all in books. So he smokes pot, cruises the streets of Evanston in the family car while listening to the Rolling Stones and every other touchstone group of the day (at times the book feels like a fast-paced game of Trivial Pursuit, "Baby Boomer" edition), loses his virginity to a Lizzie Sherman ("A dark, Sephardic-looking girl with crow-black hair, she'd sweep through the halls of Evanston High in serapes, Mexican shawls, high boots, as exotic at sixteen as a flamenco dancer"), and is obsessed with becoming a poet.

We follow Ben through every obligatory rite of sexual and literary passage—Miller, not Bellow, is his source for the former—and then we are done. The episodes do not build to anything, the characters do not come to life, there is no grand awakening. What we gain, however, is a nonpareil insight into what it feels like to be trapped inside a fantasy-bubble of ambition. *The Great Pretender* will sit nicely alongside *The Culture of Narcissism* on the library shelf.

THE Harvard chapters are, for my money, the hardest to take. For page after page we are asked to endure Ben's sycophantic courtship of the great Morgan "Chip" Ames. (Read: Robert "Cal" Lowell.) All of the familiar anecdotes and tics are here: "Hunched down in his chair, smoke dribbling from between his moist lips, he would spin his manic fantasies. . . ." We've read about Lowell's seminars in a dozen memoirs already—nothing new or fresh is added. Ben gawks at greatness incarnate, goes into paroxysms of anxiety when his own efforts are on the block, and clings to every shred of praise. His friend Bob helps to stoke his fire:

> What fascinated Bob was the convergence of our lives. He couldn't wait to settle down with a beer at the Harvard Gardens and gloat over the fact that the same boys who used to pass a Campbell's soup can back and forth in his Glencoe kitchen were now sitting around a seminar table at Harvard having their poems compared by Morgan Ames. Where would it end? On the *Dick Cavett Show*, maybe—with a real microphone.

This is no longer cute, it's frightening. To confess to self-glorifying ambition does not make everything O.K. Ben is too sure that he deserves success, and Atlas never makes it clear that he doesn't.

In his last year at Harvard, Ben meets

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Eleanor, another distressingly vicarious creature. The two end up spending a year together at Oxford. But nothing of compelling emotional interest happens. They squabble, sulk, patch up. Ben nourishes ancient fantasies about Lizzie. And then Bob arrives and steals Eleanor away. Not that anyone much cares, Ben included. *The Great Pretender* ends with the return home of our sadder-but-wiser hero. Flying between California and New York, Ben thinks of Stephen Dedalus. Dedalus, as we recall, vowed to fly beyond the nets of his narrow heritage. Ben, though he doesn't know this, has a bigger project facing him—he must fly beyond the net of words and find the world. I fear he will not make it.

SVEN BIRKERTS

Sven Birkerts has recently completed *Hamann's Bone: Essays in the Language of Poetry*.

TALE OF TABOO

As We Forgive
by Barbara Neil

(St. Martin's Press, 223 pp., $15.95)

The crux of Barbara Neil's first novel seems to lie in her title, those ambiguous three words from the middle of a prayer. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Is there a deal implied in those words? You're forgiven only if you forgive? Only to the degree that you forgive? An uneasy combination of shame and self-interest seems hidden in that phrase, and at the heart of *As We Forgive*.

More than one of Neil's characters are seeking absolution. Everyone apologizes to everyone else, and usually not to the person they've most harmed. Ben Wavell, the powerful, charismatic man at the root of much of the trouble, wants the forgiveness of Lydia, his much younger, somewhat tremulous lover—not for what he's done to her, but for what he's done to his daughter, Nathalie, Lydia's childhood friend. Natta apologizes—obliquely—to Lydia for the havoc her father has caused. Lydia feels generally dreadful. Even Eric, Lydia's husband and the one person with little to apologize for, pops up occasionally mumbling, "Sorry, sorry."

Who are all these guilty people and what is it that forces them to explain themselves to one another, four years after the tragedy they hint at occurred? We gather early on that this isn't the healthiest batch of characters a novel could have, yet Neil manages to make their intense, obsessive relationship as fascinating to us as it is, apparently, to them.

The connecting lines between the central triangle—Ben, Lydia, and Nathalie—are drawn early in the novel. Neil takes us back to childhood summers at the Wavells' home on the English coast. Father and daughter carry on shamelessly at lunchtime, ordering butlers, guests, and dogs about, staging foolish performances for one another, exchanging extravagant gifts and merciless teasing. Lydia looks on and aches for "a smear of the confidence it bred." It's a charming picture, and we don't blame Lydia for wanting to be a part of it.

Next thing we know, though, some trauma is behind them and a grown Lydia is listening to Ben's insistent confession, letting him bully and plead, beg and cajole, and force her to relive, in memory, the whole sad story. Neil handles this telling with great skill, revealing a discomfiting tale with excruciating control. She has a phenomenal ability to reveal just the right thing at just the right time, which makes for compelling—and gratifying—reading. Piecing together hints of Ben's current anguish with what Neil has told us of the Wavells' past, we start to see how things are going to go—and they do go that way, confirming both our worst fears and our confidence in our own perception. Neil has us where she wants us—craving to know exactly why, exactly how what we see coming occurred. She keeps us constantly just this side of queasy—which may not sound like high praise but, given the tricky theme she's chosen to deal with, is.

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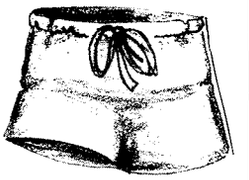

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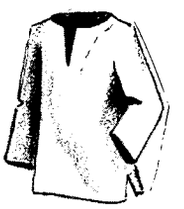

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In the process of letting us know what happened, Neil slips back and forth between present and past so subtly that they become intermingled in our minds, creating a disturbing sense of inevitable repetition. These people are trapped, we feel; all they can do is continually try to explain themselves. This Neil allows them to do at length. Her perceptions are often eerily accurate, yet she's set herself a difficult task simply by choosing to give over so much of her story to extended confession. Guilt and self-justification are not always the easiest things to witness. A certain amount of impatience can set in, along with the suspicion that the confessor is actually glorying in the drama of his transgressions.

NEIL HERE faces a variation on the problem of writing about boredom without being boring: how to depict people who explain themselves dramatically and not quite convincingly without making the writing histrionic and unpersuasive. How to write about people who call their home "Eden," or about a character like Ben who begs to be "saved from desolation"? Nathalie, from childhood, poses and playacts. As a girl of 11 or so, she places herself in an embroidered white dress at the head of the staircase at her parents' ball: "We can stand and watch everyone and when they look up and see me I'll be wearing this." Her sense of herself as a dramatic entity only strengthens as she grows older, until she's insisting to Lydia that, like her father, she has "an inheritance of evil" that compels her to destroy whatever is of value in the lives of those around her. "Really, Nathalie," says Lydia, and we too are disbelieving, unimpressed. The problem with letting your characters speak for themselves so much is that their exaggerations, their lapses of control, may seem like yours.

And there are overstatements in the novel that can't easily be ascribed to the exaggerations of the characters, points at which the author's effort to affect her reader is simply too evident. Neil stages, for example, a rather schematic dream for Lydia. Terrified she'll lose Ben to a woman she knows little about aside from the color of her hair, Lydia dreams she's "in a desert being chased by a girl with very long, dark hair. The girl was furious with Lydia about something and Lydia was frightened." Contrivances like these are unnecessary, as is a locket that materializes at a moment of high tension, making literal a connection we'd rather see left implicit.

But these are quibbles. Such missteps stand out only because elsewhere Neil is so surefooted. She has taken on two difficult problems: a delicate theme and some aggressively articulate characters. The theme she handles with exquisite control, establishing an almost psychic relationship with her readers, an ability to show us only what we are willing to accept. And the characters she finally makes us care for, even forgive.

KATHLEEN KEARNS

Kathleen Kearns is an editorial assistant at Viking/Penguin.

DYING BY THE PEN

The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street by Nigel Cross

(Cambridge University Press, 265 pp., $39.50)

The common writer of the 19th century, and of this book, was not Charles Dickens. Nor was she George Eliot. She may have been Eliza Parsons. In 1803, at age 62, Parsons sat in the King's Bench debtor's prison, incarcerated because she herself had not been paid by another (by the king of England, who was exempt from imprisonment for debt—but that is another story). Twenty years earlier she had been happily engaged as a middle-class wife and mother. But when she found herself widowed with eight children and no money, Parsons felt compelled to avail herself of what she called "the Fashion of the times." She became a novelist. She became so fashionable a novelist, in fact, that by the time she entered prison she had published 65 volumes, two of which would gain odd immortality when Jane Austen put them on a short list of horrifying gothic tales in *Northanger Abbey*. Despite her modest fame, Parsons lived and died near poverty.

Or the common writer of the 19th century may have been Gerald Massey. A common laborer as well as writer, Massey left his rural work as a straw plaiter and moved to London, where he joined the Chartists and wrote revolutionary poetry—"Fling out the red Banner," he cried. "The slaves are awaking—the dawn-light is breaking—/ The foot-fall of Freedom beats quick at our hearts!" In 1850, at age 22, he leapt to fame with his collection *Voices of Freedom, Lyrics of Love*. It earned him only £30, however. At that rate, Massey would have needed two collections each year to sustain a middle-class life, and so when reviewers praised his love lyrics over his political voices, Massey learned to write for the establishment's praise and remuneration. By the 1860s his voice had mellowed nicely: the queen granted him a civil pension, and a London review thanked him for "the merriest marriage ditties and the most touching lays of child-life" ever "given to the world."

A Parsons and a Massey can no more stand for an age than can Dickens and Eliot. But in *The Common Writer*, Nigel Cross demonstrates convincingly that such stories of financial struggle and artistic surrender, more than any triumphs, typified the lot of the 19th-century author. The mass of them lived lives of desperate scribbling, and his book follows their nonliterary efforts to survive: beseeching aid from benevolent funds; sending begging letters to such famous writers as Dickens and Macaulay; aspiring to escape the hack writing of working-class "penny dreadfuls" in order to emerge as a poet or essayist known to the middle class; struggling to support an unemployed husband or impoverished lover by churning out best-selling romances, often at a mere shilling a page, for publishers who amassed fortunes.

The number of such writers increased dramatically during the 19th century—by Cross's estimate, from perhaps 550 in

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1800 to some 9,000 in 1900. As he points out, these writers were "called into existence" by the unprecedented growth of a mass market of readers in 19th-century England. His book complements the masterful book which documents that growth, Richard Altick's *The English Common Reader*. But whereas Altick chronicles the unprecedented consumption of books by a populace hungry for wit and wisdom, Cross chronicles the related consumption of writers by a publishing industry hungry for profits. And whereas Altick describes, for example, the books that influenced the working-class writer Alexander Somerville, Cross portrays Somerville's hardscrabble literary genesis:

> I walked out of Glasgow, three or four miles up the Clyde, got into a field of beans nearly ripe, crept out of sight to the middle of the field, lay there three days and nights, writing the first chapters of my [first book], and living on the beans.

THIS TALE, like many others, Cross found in the yellowing files of a single organization, the Royal Literary Fund, where he has served for the past decade as part-time archivist. The world's oldest charity for writers and Britain's oldest literary association, the Fund has eased the anguish of impoverished litterateurs since its creation in 1790. It has also saved their letters, thus creating a gold mine that scholars have worked for biographical information about its more uncommon beneficiaries: Coleridge, Peacock, Conrad, Lawrence, and Joyce, among others.

In *The Common Writer*, however, Cross has chosen to work this incomparable archive as no other scholar has: he analyzes not the archive's nuggets but its tailings, its records of thousands of literary castoffs who did not pass time's assay test. With them, he creates the first book-length chronicle of what could be called the dawn of the "free lance"—to use a 19th-century phrase apparently coined by Sir Walter Scott for the knights-errant of *Ivanhoe*, but swiftly appropriated by common writers who fancied their pens were mightier than swords.

Though this dark dawn offers the stuff of melodrama, Cross does not overplay it, even with his tales of poverty, prison, and ill health. As I discovered when I worked in the Fund's archive last year, Cross could have included many more cases of horror or pathos: the translator whose literary efforts had declined to selling "ink by commission," the poet whose work had become "too mournful for the market," the lyricist who would "frequently faint three or four times a day" at his writing desk.

Nor does Cross miscast his villain: the publisher. Time and again, Cross recounts an author's misfortune and then leaves us to ponder a publisher's legacy. William Lane, for example, who paid poor Eliza Parsons £40 per novel, "left £17,500 at his death." William Heinemann, who complained of royalties so high that they "leave the publisher barely his working expenses," left £33,000 at his death.

IN THIS drama of author and publisher, *The Common Writer* serves a political as well as historical purpose: it asks us to consider where the money comes from and where it goes, and not just during the past century. As demonstrated by a PEN study from 1978, which suggested that two-thirds of literary writers in America were earning less than $10,000 a year from writing, the world of the common writer still is too much with us. As anyone who has lived as a freelance writer knows, most original work receives less payment than does the secondary work of editors, agents, and publishers.

Cross does not make this point explicitly, but he makes explicit his identification with the modern freelancer. In his acknowledgments he explains that for four years he slipped the writing of this book "into the schedule of an itinerant journalist." He acknowledges also a fellowship of £2,500 (about $3,500) from a charitable foundation (the modern recipient of writers' begging letters), and he thanks his publishers for the "promise" of £500 (about $700, for a book that sells at almost $40). "I understand," he adds, "that this—for an academic press—is a noble gesture."

Noble or not, it raises the question of whether more adequate support would have produced a better book. It might, for example, have allowed Cross to treat more fully the 18th-century background (whence Grub Street originated, as a real London street where publishers reputedly forced hacks to sleep three to a bed). Or it might have given him the opportunity to provide fuller comparisons to the plights of uncommon writers, such as Jane Austen (who found publishers unwilling to print either *Pride and Prejudice* or *Northanger Abbey*, and who broke through only by having *Sense and Sensibility* published at her own expense).

No one would argue, of course, that mere infusions of cash can produce a masterwork. But here again, a book like *The English Common Reader* can serve for comparison. Professor Altick's acknowledgments to his university—for grants, for lightened teaching loads, for leaves of absence, for research assistants, for the support of library staff, and (implicitly) for a salary during the ten years he spent on his book—suggest that time and money contribute something to quality. And so Cross's book seems implicated in its own subject—the difficulty faced by the common writer, in any century, who attempts significant work.

Writers often hear the argument that impoverishment can enrich art. But most of Cross's readers would respond, with the poet William Blake, that "the argument is better for affluence than poverty": perfect art arises only when its creator is "in affluence or is above the care of it."

FRED STREBEIGH

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Humanism with and without tears.

MALAMUD'S GRACE

BY RICHARD GILMAN

THE *Times* headline reads: "Bernard Malamud Is Dead at 71. Author Depicted Human Struggle." Well, yes, I think, after recovering from the shock and starting to feel the sorrow, he did do that. But don't all writers do it in one way or another? Isn't there a depiction of human struggle even in those books that don't make it their theme or subject, even in those "inhuman" works (as Robbe-Grillet's novels were called) that are more concerned with the nature of language or perception than with lives? To write at all, to set down words in formal ways, to imagine fictively, is to report on a struggle. Malamud did that, more directly than most.

But what kind of a writer was he? Rilke spoke of fame as "the sum of misunderstandings that has gathered around a person." Malamud was known for having had "compassion," "moral wisdom," a concern for the "ordinary man." True, but was that what made him a good writer? The misunderstanding in his case lies in how the relation between those virtues and writing itself is seen.

If anything, what we might call the humanistic values of his writing gave him an air of being a little out of date—earnest, kindly, thoughtful. His gaze was on the perennial, instead of conjuring with our confusions and chaos and inventing brilliantly in order to confront and combat them. He was a storyteller in an era when most of our best writers have been suspicious of straightforward narrative. Nobody thinks of him as an innovator, unless being among the first to bring the rhythms and intonations of Jewish, or Yiddish, speech to formal prose counts as innovation.

He himself contributed to the image of a somewhat old-fashioned, or unfashionable, champion of the spirit, a humanist in a literary era in which humanism is almost anomalous. Again and again he used the word "human" in the occasional interviews and speeches he gave: "My work . . . is an idea of dedication to the human. . . . If you don't respect man, you cannot respect my work. I'm in defense of the human." And he spoke of art as "sanctifying human life and freedom."

So what's to object, as he might have put it? Those lofty, sonorous phrases, more mottoes than anything else, left me uncomfortable when they came from him and leave me so when they come from others. It isn't enough to speak of defending the human or respecting man, or rather it sounds a bit self-serving and even pompous. Did he think it was what was expected of him? To shift the burden to us, isn't it naive to say that he "touched our hearts"? Bad fiction, melodramas, kitsch touch our hearts too, bring tears more reliably, certainly in greater floods, than does good writing.

It seems to me that Malamud was usually at his weakest when he sought or fell into too direct a way to our emotions, when he was most self-consciously "humane." I think of stories like "Black Is My Favorite Color," "The Lady of the Lake," and "The Loan," each brought down by predictable sentiment, and even more of novels such as *The Fixer*, at once heavy, pseudo-lyrical, and tendentious; *The Tenants*, where social painfulness isn't fully transmuted into imaginative truth; and *God's Grace*, embarrassingly cute in a mode of fantasy—jocose, biblically flavored science fiction—to which he wasn't suited.

To what, then, was he suited? To begin with, there is that swift rooting of so many of his protagonists in an occupation or a past. His opening words located his characters: "S. Levin, formerly a drunkard"; "Davidov, the census-taker"; "Manischevitz, a tailor"; "Fidelman, a self-confessed failure as a painter"; "Kessler, formerly an egg-candler." Having so placed them, relieved of the necessity to develop them, yet having granted them a specificity that kept them from being parabolic, he moved them quickly into position to experience their fates. These are destinies of self-recognition—ironic, painful, lugubrious, or threnodic—and they are, when all is working well, revelatory of the morally or psychically unknown, or not yet known. And along the way, there are the pleasures of the text, the little fates of language:

From *Idiots First*: "He drew on his cold embittered clothing."

From "The Magic Barrel": "Life, despite their frantic yoohoings, had passed them by."

From "The Girl of My Dreams": ". . . he pitied her, her daughter, the world. Who not?"

From "The Death of Me": "His heart, like a fragile pitcher, toppled from the shelf and bump bumped down the stairs, cracking at the bottom."

From "The Jewbird": "The window was open so the skinny bird flew in. Flappity-flap with its frazzled black wings. That's how it goes. It's open, you're in. Closed, you're out, and that's your fate."

From *Dubin's Lives*: "On the road a jogger trotted toward him, a man with a blue band around his head. He slowed down as Dubin halted. 'What are you running for?' the biographer asked him. 'All I can't stand to do. What about you?' 'Broken heart, I think.' 'Ah, too bad about that.' They trotted in opposing directions."

From somewhere: "exaltation went where exaltation goes."

HE WAS NEITHER a realist nor a fantasist. He was both. I don't mean he alternated between reality and fantasy, but that at his best the line between the two was obliterated. Observation gave way to imagining. Without strain, experience flowed into dream. In some stories characters and properties literally move up into the air, as in Chagall, with whose paintings these tales have been justly compared. "He heard an odd noise, as though of a whirring of wings, and when he strained for a wider view, could have sworn he saw a dark figure borne aloft on a pair of magnificent black wings" ("Angel Levine"). "He pictured, in her, his own redemption. Violins and lit candles revolved in the sky" ("The Magic Barrel"). Even a story like "The Jewbird" (to my mind perhaps his finest), a piece that appears all whimsy and allegorical effort, is anchored in pebbly actuality, an actuality into which the bird flies, scattering meanings as he does feathers, an agent of our own self-knowledge.

In a culture where quantity is god it may seem demeaning to say that Bernard Malamud was a better short-story writer than novelist. Yet a case can be made that many great or good writers of fiction in English have been better mak-

Richard Gilman is the author most recently of *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

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ers of stories than of novels: Hawthorne, to go way back, Lawrence, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Cheever, Flannery O'Connor. She wrote in a letter of 1958 about a short-story writer "who is better than any one of them, including myself. Go to the library [for] a book called *The Magic Barrel* by Bernard Malamud." (He was immensely pleased, for he greatly esteemed her.)

To be sure, the novels have their pleasures, but even in the best of them his predilection for the shorter form often shows itself, straining against what novels are supposed to be. Books as good as *The Assistant* and *Dubin's Lives* are, I think, more notable in some ways for their nearly self-contained sequences than for their architectonics and narrative continuity. He may have called *Pictures of Fidelman* an "Exhibition" because he saw that it would otherwise be taken for a novel (it was by most anyway) and faulted for its lack of development. It wasn't easy for him to follow a fiction through a long, complicated course to its end. His wish for those qualities of epiphany, of revelation and decisive verbal triumph, kept breaking through.

What makes his place in literature and our memories secure isn't his themes or subjects. It isn't his nobility of purpose, his compassion or moral understanding, in short, his humanism. Or rather it's not those qualities in themselves, as detached and detachable essences. One wants to say to the sentimental admirers of his fiction (as well as to those erstwhile admirers who found him growing "cold" in his later work) that imaginative writing isn't the exemplification of preexisting values and virtues. It is their discovery, against all odds, in the shocks and surprises of the unfolding tale. The imagination teaches us newly. It doesn't instruct us in what we already know, and it certainly doesn't grant us our comfortable, "humane" wishes.

"It's not easy to be moral," thinks Cronin, the protagonist of "A Choice of Profession." It's at least as difficult to shed moral light in fiction, where the recalcitrance of words, their pressure toward the familiar—and hence the unenlightening—is constant and unyielding. "Creativity," Arthur Koestler wrote, "is the defeat of habit by originality." Habit was for Bernard Malamud, as for all true writers, the enemy from which you wrest the victories you can, replacing, through a series of miracles, the banalities or weariness of language with its grace.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 4*

ballots, it seems quite likely that the results could have been similar.

JOSEPH O'GALLAGHER
Flossmoor, Illinois

DANCING IN THE DARK

To the editors:

Stanley Kauffmann's otherwise thorough and perceptive review of *My Beautiful Laundrette* (April 7) contains one glaring error. I refer to the scene he describes in which the young Pakistani protagonist, Omar, and his English friend Johnny are making love in the laundrette's office, while at the same time we see, through the window of the office, Omar dancing with his uncle Nasser. But Nasser is not dancing with Omar—he's with his English mistress Rachel. It is this contrasting love duet that serves as a metaphorical counterpoint for the movie's themes, which in other respects Kauffmann correctly observed.

ALLAN SACKS
Washington, D.C.

NIEBUHR WAS NICE

To the editors:

In Paul Roazen's review of Richard Fox's biography of Reinhold Niebuhr ("A Life in the Fray," March 31), he concludes, along with several other recent reviewers, that Niebuhr was a cold and unemotional person, based on the information that Fox provides. This view of Niebuhr's character is considerably wide of the mark. Niebuhr and my father were colleagues at Union Theological Seminary for 30 years, and although they often disagreed on issues, they remained close, warm friends throughout their lives. I often observed Niebuhr with friends and intellectual peers and was as much impressed by the depth of friendship he displayed as by his powers of debate.

HUGH VAN DUSEN
Ossining, New York

TRB, *from page 6*

get there. In the interim, the world will become a vastly more dangerous place.

Second, superiority is not permanent. We had it until the early 1960s, and then lost it. Conservatives allege that the Soviets had it a decade ago and are losing it. At vast expense, we might get it again for a few years, but there's no guarantee we could keep it. The Soviets certainly would do everything they could to prevent that. They tried before, and succeeded.

Third, what would we do with superiority if we had it? Not, I presume, start a nuclear war. Having nuclear superiority is not like having a nuclear monopoly, as in the 1940s. Any nuclear exchange would be disastrous for us, even if we "won" it in the sense of destroying the Soviet Union while emerging with our society somewhat intact. The Soviet goal in seeking nuclear superiority, according to the conservative analysis, is not conquest but "Finlandization" of the West. That is, knowledge that the Soviets could "win" a nuclear exchange might make our side more hesitant to push matters to the brink. The practical result, after a series of chess moves played out inside people's heads, would be a weakening of Western resistance to lesser acts of Soviet aggression.

The dream of American nuclear superiority is of some kind of reverse Finlandization. Without lifting a finger, we could prevent the suppression of Solidarity, reverse the invasion of Afghanistan, etc. But Finlandization depends, ultimately, on a fear that one side might "go nuclear" in pursuit of political ends. And—much to our credit—the fear of such ruthlessness is inherently less believable about the United States than about the Soviet Union. We didn't even exploit our nuclear monopoly when we had it. (Of course it wasn't morning in America yet.) The fact is, nuclear superiority is simply not as useful for us as it is for the Soviets.

Fourth and most important, the quest for nuclear superiority undermines the quest for nuclear security, whether through arms construction or arms control. A defensive nuclear strategy is fundamentally different from an offensive one. If your goal is safety from nuclear attack, you want an arrangement of weapons that maximizes your ability to retaliate if your enemy strikes first, while minimizing your enemy's fear that you can destroy *his* ability to retaliate if *you* strike first. His confidence of retaliating after a first strike is central to your security, because otherwise he has a powerful incentive to strike before you do. But if your goal is superiority, making the enemy fear a successful first strike from you is the whole idea. Even if you get "superiority," you also get a bigger chance of trying it out. I can't believe even conservative intellectuals want that.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Backsliding

I BELIEVE IN keeping my options open. I subscribe to three long-distance phone services (what if one cuts me off?), rent apartments in three cities (not sure where I want to live), and have throughout my life paid taxes in two states (maybe I'll run for office, and I figure a good way to fight a "carpetbagger" charge is to display a lifetime of local tax returns). Various career paths beckon, the more so the longer they promise to delay the moment of actual choice. When I read that the New York law firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore had raised its starting salary to $65,000 a year, I briefly thought it might be a nice idea to go to law school. Then I realized I'd already gone to law school.

COME TO THINK of it, they couldn't pay me enough to be a lawyer. But Cravath wasn't forced to start this latest round of salary escalation because of people like me, but because of partners and associates exercising their options to go into the more lucrative field of investment banking. Even with the raise, the law firms can't match the bankers, and this has driven $300,000-a-year corporate counselors to wistful laments about the materialistic spirit of the age. "Maybe I'm a dreamer," one big-firm partner told the *New York Times*, "but I do believe that there are still people in the world who want to be lawyers, who like to do the things we do, and are not just interested in compensation." Dream on, buddy.

ANOTHER POIGNANT note was struck in a *Washington Post* headline on April 9: OIL SLUMP'S DAMAGE SPREADING; ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL ADVANCES THREATENED. Visions of tapped-out Texans forgetting how to use a fish fork, backsliding from pâté and Impressionism into chicken-fried steak and Minnie Pearl. Pathetic caravans of opera lovers winding their way in tattered Audis back to Manhattan. A generation of Sunbelt schoolchildren unable to pronounce décolletage. Of course, I never much approved of the Sunbelt's attempts to acquire Culture in the first place. I am a philistine. I concede that just as there may be a few people who really want to become lawyers, there may be, in this great, diverse nation of ours, people who really enjoy the work of Julian Schnabel and understand the meaning of the word "painterly." Some of my best friends like modern art. But I share the suspicion of my mentor Charles Peters that 80 percent of the people who go to art museums and galleries are really going to assert a kind of class snobbery, to flatter themselves on their education and good taste and meet others with the same credentials. Some proof of this proposition, I think, may be found in the repeated failure of the various fancy cable-TV arts networks. Watching TV alone, at home, has no snob value. Nobody notices what you're wearing and what good taste you have. And watching TV alone at home, even sophisticated Americans would rather turn on "Moonlighting." The ridiculous attempts of places like Dallas to catch up with New York in the snob race by buying up museums, staging operas, and suppressing any mention of livestock, like the attempts of millionaire oil drillers to acquire class by hiring British-trained butlers, only serve to emphasize the culture gap. Why play New York's game? Let them eat chic. If King Fahd's attempt at predatory pricing leaves Houston with fewer Hockneys and more honky-tonks, it will be a better, more democratic place.

AND WHAT observations does this reporter have on returning to the capital at cherry blossom time? Well, two events seem to be capturing the attention of our seat of government. One is the opening of a new home furnishings store in nearby Potomac Mills, Virginia. Counterterrorist bombings and embassy parties may grab the limelight in this town, Martin, but cheap Swedish dining room tables are closer to what Washington is all about. The second event, which hits Washington even closer to where it lives, is the attempt to end a tax break enjoyed by retiring government workers. The pensions of most government employees are financed in part by their own contributions, which have already been subjected to tax, and in larger part by contributions from their employers, which are taxable when the pension is received. But the retirees are allowed to pretend that their initial pension checks (up to three years' worth) consist entirely of their own contributions, thus delaying the payment of any tax until their contribution has been recouped. Sounds like a minor advantage, but with 17 million employees it somehow adds up to about $7.4 billion over the next four years (compared with requiring taxes to be paid immediately on the portion of benefits contributed by the employer). In a unanimous voice vote, the Senate Finance Committee decided last week to keep the loophole, despite the objections of its chairman, the iron-willed Bob Packwood, who needs the money to make up for the other billions he's doled out to various lobbyists. The American Federation of Government Employees, which last week also became the newest member of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition (see Jacob Weisberg's story on page 10), had predicted dire consequences if the tax advantage disappeared, with workers leaving the government in droves. This is a threat oft made and never carried out. According to the most recent figures, the federal government's "quit rate" is still less than a third of that of the private sector—hardly a sign of hardship duty. I've never quite grasped the combination of idealism, timidity, whiny righteousness, and self-pity that seems to constitute the federal employee mentality. Charlie Peters reminds me that the civil service column in the old *Washington Daily News* was called "9 to 4:30." Not as a tongue-in-cheek crack, mind you, but as a totally unashamed ratification of actual custom.

THE *TIMES* seems to have added a new life-style service feature. I was leafing through its back pages the other day and came across a box, apparently related to the recent Italian methanol scandal, with the headline: LIST OF MILDLY TOXIC WINES. Very useful if you're not in the mood for anything too heavily toxic. Say you're serving some faintly tainted sea bass with a bit of slightly insecticidal broccoli, and you don't want to overdo it. These subtly poisonous varietals may be just the ticket. As James Thurber might say, "It's a mildly toxic little burgundy, but I think you'll be amused by its presumption."

MICKEY KAUS

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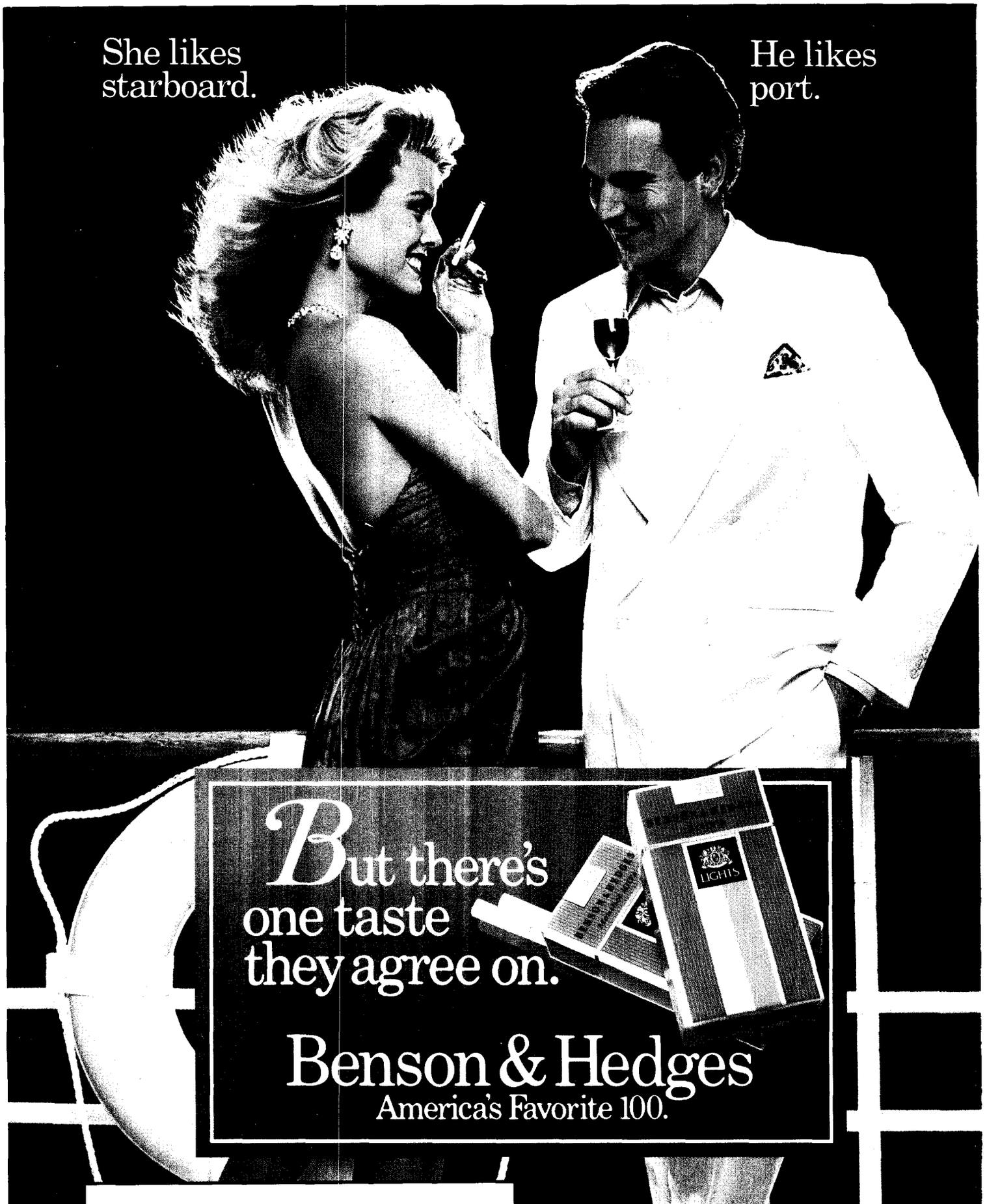
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